FORTY-ODD YEARS IN THE LITERARY SHOP

JAMES L. FORD

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When I endeavour to
portray
The late King Edward,
strange to say
The picture, of its own
accord,
Turns into that of
James L. Ford.—

Oliver Herford

FORTY-ODD YEARS IN THE LITERARY SHOP

BY

JAMES L. FORD

AUTHOR OF "THE LITERARY SHOP,"
"BOHEMIA INVADED," ETC.

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FORTY-ODD YEARS IN THE LITERARY SHOP

FORTY-ODD YEARS IN THE LITERARY SHOP

CHAPTER I

TO those who realize how slender is my renown, and to the much larger number to whom my name signifies nothing, this careful setting down of the things I remember may seem an act of presumption and egotism.

It is true that there is charm, interest, and even drama in the history of nearly every human life, but, save in rare cases, only when related by someone else. He who would invest his personal records with the quality of interest must, first of all, so gain the respect and confidence of his fellow-men that they will await his utterances as the final authority on questions and events of national importance. In this spirit did the public await the autobiography of General Grant.

Fully aware of all this I hasten to assure my readers that these memoirs of an inconspicuous career will not deal with my own accomplishments but with the men and women whom I have known and the paths along which I have strayed. And I acknowledge that those who follow my trail will find themselves more often in strange, even discreditable, company than among the elect who cluster about the seats of the mighty. Rather

would I make my readers to lie down in the green pastures of literature and the drama, than to lead them beside the still waters of those wellsprings of dearly loved misinformation: Wall street, the Four Hundred and the British aristocracy. And, if my recital shall serve to destroy any of the myths born of professional publicity, I shall be content with my labors.

My determination to write these memoirs came about in this fashion. A disaster, neither the first nor the worst, and I fear not the last, of a series that overtook me during my seventh decade, brought me to the operating table in Roosevelt Hospital where I heard the voice of one invisible saying: "I am the sleep-doctor. Try to breathe three or four times through this piece of gauze." The fourth breath was superfluous for it needed only the third to bring me back to my bed in a private room, free from the pain that I had endured for many days and dimly conscious that I was permanently crippled. Such is the magic of modern surgery. Then, with my senses dulled by opiates, I entered upon a period of rest and peace to which I had long been a stranger.

Although I have always loved life and contemplated with dread its inevitable finish, I now found myself strangely indifferent to the fact, which I fully realized, that another week might find me lying where lie the kin whom I have best loved, their faces turned toward the East as demanded by ancient, pious custom, there to await that which no man can foretell. For after all I had nearly run out my course, and there remained to me at best but a few more of the years allotted by the Psalmist.

As the drug began to lose its force, I found it pleasanter to turn my thoughts away from the uncertain future and follow them back through the changing years to past joys, to the friends who had helped me over the rough places, to everything that had made life worth the living. And it was while thus idly brooding that a desire, vaguely cherished for many years, to set down some of the events, experiences and impressions of bygone days, renewed itself in my mind.

The period of convalescence in a hospital is not without its compensations, one of which is the getting better and better as the days roll on instead of sinking deeper and deeper into the Slough of Despond. My door never opened save to admit someone I was glad to see, and of the many tried friends whom I had reason to expect, few failed me, while many, whom I had regarded as mere acquaintances, gladdened me by their generous sympathy. The rector and curate of a church in which I had never set foot, came more than once, and one afternoon I awoke to see close beside my bed the kindly face and grizzled beard of my old school room-mate. Gifts of flowers, fruit and cigarettes soon made the place look like a prima donna's dressing room and did much to dispel a long ingrained suspicion that women are incapable of gratitude. To recite the number and quality of my visitors would be to confess myself eaten with the resultant vanity—a secret best locked in my own bosom.

But it was not vanity that prompted me to begin my story with this sorrowful recital, but a desire to show how my misfortune gave me a new and more kindly

perspective through which to look back over the sixty odd years of my journeying.

Viewed through this new perspective the shifting decades offer a long vista, dim in sundry places but shining brightly at its furthest end on a wide, shady garden where, under wise and loving parental guidance I had a little sister to play with and a kind elder brother to kick me when I tried to be funny.

I was born in St. Louis but what I like to call my "career" did not begin in earnest until I was four years old and we came to live in a large, rambling wooden house on Clinton Avenue, in Brooklyn. I still retain a vivid recollection of the tree-shaded street, the houses, many of which are still standing, set in deep gardens, the little boys with whom I played, and St. Luke's Church, with the gravestones before its door. Thither we children were led on Sundays, and in the rectory I went to school a few years later. The rector of the church was Dr. Jacob Diller and his daughter was my teacher. Both were lost in the burning of the steamboat *Seawanhaka* in 1880.

My father was led to settle in Brooklyn through a previous enterprise of a cousin of his whom we children called "Uncle Hobart" and of whose kindly nature and liberal hand I still retain most agreeable memories. In the late forties Uncle Hobart came to New York, having failed in business in Rochester, put up at the old New York Hotel and then proceeded to study the commercial aspects of the city. He walked down Broadway to Wall

Street and thence to the East River where he stood looking over to the shores of Brooklyn. The harbor was white with sails, for the freight traffic of the world had not then passed into the hands of steamship companies, and he was at once impressed with the value of certain unoccupied portions of the water front. Having selected the most desirable warehouse site within his range of vision, he crossed the river, sought out its owner, and eventually persuaded him to build Ford's Stores, now Prentice's Stores, directly south of Wall Street Ferry, and to allow him to pay for them from their profits. In a few years he was accounted a rich man and induced my father to lease the warehouses on the other side of the ferry entrance, known to this day as Pierrepont Stores.

My early impressions of Brooklyn and New York are still clear in my mind. The Ridgewood Reservoir was then in process of construction under Mr. Kirkwood, a friend of my father's from his civil engineering days, and I recall one Sunday, before the water was turned in, when we three walked across its bed. There was not a single house in Brooklyn that contained a bath-room and the first time I ever saw one I regarded it as a novel and imposing spectacle. Every block had its pump from which all the families supplied themselves, and well-to-do residents kept their own cows, even in such fashionable quarters as the Heights. The best mode of transit between remote Harlem and the lower part of New York was by a line of steamboats bearing such names as *The Sylvan Grove* and *The Sylvan Shore,* and on one occasion we devoted a whole day to a visit to some family

friends named Bartow who lived in a gray farmhouse in a country neighborhood which I judge was not far from what is now the corner of One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and the Boulevard.

Communication between New York and Brooklyn was by means of ferry-boats, and those of Wall Street Ferry carried the most aristocratic company, for they drained the Heights, where dwelt such families as the Lows, the Lymans, the McLeans, the Whites, the Frothinghams and the Pierreponts. The Academy of Music, the Park Theatre, and Hooley's Minstrels were the only places of amusement that I can recall, and of these, the last named was the most prosperous, sharing with an "Eagle" writer who signed himself "Corry O'Lanus," the duty of supplying the town with humor.

In New York there were still several families of distinction to be found on the Battery and on the south side of Bowling Green, and the young men who made New Year's calls began their day's work there and ended it not far from Thirty-fourth Street. That annual feast day was always hailed with delight by boys of my age for we journeyed from house to house and gorged ourselves at every one of the well spread tables. The custom was an excellent one so long as the city remained small enough to continue it. To this day I remember it in connection with pickled oysters, a dish that, like the annual occasion that provided it, has long since fallen into desuetude.

We had not been long in Clinton Avenue before my education was begun under the wise direction of my grandmother, who taught me by a method still unsur-

passed by that of any pedagogic institution that I know of. I received two peppermints if I learned my lesson and two raps on the side of the head if I did not, and under this healthful stimulus I advanced rapidly into the realms of knowledge. In later years I have learned many of the bitter lessons of life at a cost in suffering far greater than any endured under that venerable lady's knuckles.

My grandmother was born in 1790 and her mind was rich in memories of years long past, so that my early influences were those of the days when the nation was young. My grandfather, twenty years her senior, had been a member of Congress, and his father, a friend of Washington's, had been at one time President of the Senate. Grandma often told me how her husband had long looked forward to the fulfilment of his father's promise that he should one day pay a visit to Mt. Vernon, but it was not until he had reached his thirtieth year that he set out on horseback from his New Hampshire home for the Capitol, carrying his effects in his saddle-bags. Bitter was his disappointment when, on his arrival in Washington, he was greeted with the news of the General's death. Another anecdote of my grandmother's I have never seen printed. During his years of circuit riding, in company with other lawyers and judges, grandfather was wont to stop with an inn-keeping farmer who had an unusually bright boy, and it was largely through my forebear's influence and that of Jeremiah Mason, a Portsmouth lawyer, that the inn-keeper was induced to send his son to college and thus give him a start in the world. Afterward this boy,

Daniel Webster, pleaded his first cause before my grandfather, then holding court at Plymouth, New Hampshire, and I believe the building is pointed out to strangers to this day.

Another story of Webster that my grandmother told me, related to a time when, as a law student in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he boarded with a family of education and refinement, whose manners were greatly superior to his own. The young son pitied Daniel, whose intellect he had already come to respect, and suggested to his mother a scheme for improving his table manners without hurting his feelings. The mistress of the house gladly agreed to do what she could and the plan was worked out in this fashion. The son would violate, in some simple fashion, the family code of etiquette, by holding his fork improperly or by resting his elbow on the table; then his mother would rebuke him while both would take care not to notice young Webster in any way. In this fashion, the embryo statesman was enabled to correct every one of his faults and in no case did he fail to take advantage of the lesson thus tactfully given.

We had at least two celebrities in our family, Major Rogers, the Indian ranger, of whom my grandmother always spoke bitterly because he became a Tory; and a cousin of my mother's called Harriet Livermore whom she and other members of her family regarded as an infernal nuisance. Rogers' Leap, in the Lake George district, is still pointed out as the place from which the Major escaped from pursuing savages.

Harriet Livermore, whom the poet Whittier has celebrated in "Snow Bound," was an eccentric and highly

gifted woman who once preached before both houses of Congress, and that, too, at a time when women were expected to hold their tongues. She had traveled in the Far East at a time when few Americans made such journeys and had lived with Lady Hester Stanhope until the two quarreled over a horse on which each one desired to ride when the Messiah should appear. On her return to this country, Miss Livermore paid a visit to her relatives in Plymouth and talked so entertainingly of her experiences that the neighbors came to listen and were quite delighted when she offered to give a free lecture in the village church.

Now Harriet Livermore had a violent temper, in which respect she was not alone in the family, and as she began her lecture some one on entering the church left the door open and she promptly requested him to shut it. As others repeated the offense she became almost frantic with rage until at last my uncle took up the post of doorkeeper in the hope of staying her wrath. But a far greater mortification was in store for her relatives, who had always thought pretty well of themselves. At the close of her discourse the lecturer said that she now supported herself by selling a certain brand of pills and she thought that every one who had kept that door open should buy at least one box of the nostrum, whose efficacy she dwelt upon in no uncertain voice.

Grandma always brought her recital of this episode to a close in these words: "And from that day to this, I have never had a moment's peace for fear Harriet Livermore would find out where we were living and come and make us a visit."

On the wall of our drawing-room in Clinton Avenue there hung, and still hangs over my own fireplace, a portrait of my great-grandmother, painted in Portsmouth by a youth of eighteen, John Singleton Copley. I used to regard that portrait with awe because no matter into what corner of the room I crept, its eyes persistently followed me, a constant reminder of the all-seeing eyes of God. Once, when I had stolen some sugar from the bowl, I was afraid to look it in the face and consumed my plunder in another room. My grandmother, who owned the picture and on her death bequeathed it to me, had received what was considered a very fine education in her girlhood, but which did not go further than a training in the so-called "accomplishments" then deemed essential to polite life. She was taught to play on the first piano brought into her native state and to sing such songs as "Life Let Us Cherish," which she used to render in her later years in a sweet, quavering voice to her own accompaniment. She was also taught to use water colors, and I still have a specimen of her work in the shape of a single flower painted on a small piece of card-board. Such art seems naïve to the point of absurdity now, yet a dozen of these flowers were painted by her for the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair in the sixties and there viewed with profound respect by local connoisseurs.

Of the many changes that mark the contrast between the life and customs of those far off days and those of the present year of grace none is more radical or striking than those wrought by the entrance of women into fields of activity formerly occupied exclusively by men,

and the manner in which the acquisition of polite "accomplishments" has given way to practical training in useful, bread-winning crafts. The position of a young girl of fifty or more years ago who found herself obliged to earn her own living seems pitiful to me now. Medicine and the law were closed to her, commerce had but little to offer and even as late as the eighties, Miss Midy Morgan, who covered the horse and cattle market for the *Times,* was the only reporter of her sex employed on a New York newspaper. To become an actress was to lose social caste, and besides, the theatre was recruited almost entirely from professional families. Neither the trained nurse nor the stenographer had appeared on the horizon, and the young woman whose circumstances I have indicated was obliged to choose between needlework and teaching. I am reminded of all this by memory of a relative of ours, a finely educated and distinctly intellectual woman whose temperament and ambition unfitted her for the age in which she lived. Young as I was, I could not but be conscious that she was in a state of chronic revolt against something, I knew not what. I know now that it was the rebellion of a mind confident of its own power against the conservatism and prejudices of an illiberal age that wore her down into an early grave.

Traditions of another sort came to us children through our nurse, an Irishwoman, the daughter of a Peninsular veteran and the widow of a Scotch sergeant, herself a Fitzgerald of sufficient distinction to have a banshee in the family. Her father had been one of the guard detailed to bury Sir John Moore and she assured us many

a time that they actually dug the grave with their bayonets "just as it says in the poem." The appearance of the banshee "whisking around the corner" and thus presaging the passing of some elderly relative, was also a matter of frequent recital in our nursery.

So impressed were we with the fame of the paternal warrior that in our nursery game, "Think of a Great Man," "Alice's Father," stood on an equal plane with Washington and Napoleon and I have no doubt he was a better soldier than many of greater renown.

In more recent years I have often heard silly women discuss, without shame, in the presence of their innocent off-spring, the information they have gained from the Sunday papers regarding the "Four Hundred," and I have recalled with heartfelt gratitude the more wholesome influences that helped to shape our infant minds.

I am quite in accord with somebody—I think it was Sidney Smith—who said that the man who talked about his ancestors was "like a potato, the best part of him underground," and I confess that the simile fits my case; indeed I am proud to say that a truthful biography of more than one of my forebears would reflect much greater credit on the family name than will the memoirs on which I have embarked. Moreover my rather extensive reading of autobiography has taught me that the dullest are those that harp the most persistently on the author's family, so I shall say nothing further of mine in the pages yet to come. But in describing any journey it is necessary to describe the point of departure, and I deem it not boastful to show that I began my wanderings through the many strata of New York's social struc-

ture from a starting point of old-fashioned American conservatism of a kind that foreigners do not believe exists here, and with a mind equipped with traditions handed down through many generations of long-settled, God-fearing, English-speaking stock. And not even the strange company that I have kept from time to time has robbed me of my inheritance, although the seeking of that company was prompted by the wanderlust so often born of conservatism.

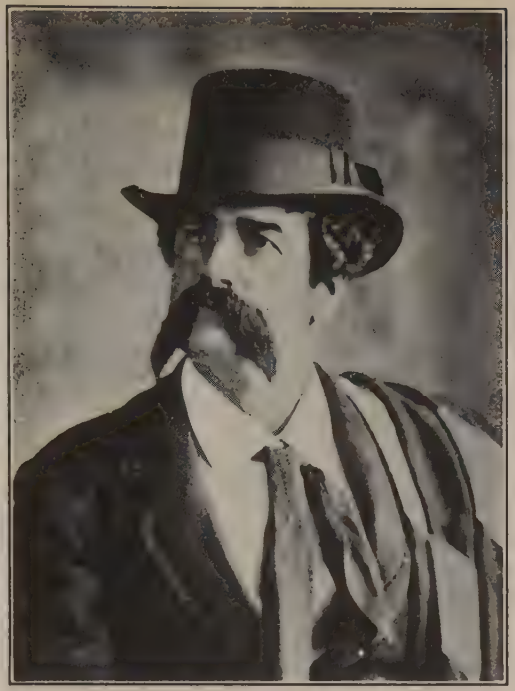
Now and then we children were taken to Coney Island, then a waste of white sand with a few sheds and bathing houses and one or two old-fashioned hotels. It was a strictly family resort then, for Norton's Point, at the western end of the island, had not become the community of thugs and bounty-jumpers that it was during the war. When I went to visit my cousin Simeon on Remsen Street, we played in what was called "Mike's lot," which occupied the greater part of a block between Remsen, Hicks and Montague Streets. One of my playmates was Seth Low and the portrait of another companion of my early youth may be found in the Rogue's Gallery.

What is now Bedford Avenue was a way station on the Long Island Railroad, whose cars then ran to South Ferry, passing through a tunnel near Clinton Street. Sometimes our nurse took us out to some Irish friends in Bedford where we were surreptitiously fed on sweets of a forbidden sort.

A still greater treat was afforded us by occasional visits to Barnum's Museum at the corner of Broadway and Ann Street, where we gazed with wonder on the "What-is-it," and "Woolly Horse," the cage of drugged animals

called the Happy Family and, most diverting of all, the "Cherry Colored Cat"—which proved to be of the hue of a black cherry and still abides with me as a precious memory. The Museum contained a theatre, called, in deference to religious prejudice, a lecture room, and thither we were led one afternoon to see a representation of the great moral and instructive Biblical drama, "Joseph and his Brethren." But when, at the close of the first act, a short-skirted ballet-dancer appeared on the scene we were led forth, howling lustily, by the pious aunt who had us in charge.

Phineas Taylor Barnum was probably the greatest showman this country has ever seen, great because he knew the American public thoroughly and kept its tastes and prejudices uppermost in his mind as a guiding star in everything that he undertook. Of the many managers who have ended in bankruptcy within my memory nearly every one failed because he allowed his own taste to supersede that of his public. Barnum was, moreover, a master of the science of publicity: his public utterances never failed to draw attention to his Museum and some of them were so impressive as to become immortal. His saying that the "public loves to be humbugged" is still echoing down the corridors of time and has brought disaster to many who have taken it too literally. For Barnum himself never humbugged his public, but gave a full measure of entertainment to everybody who paid for admission at his door. From the stage of his "lecture room" went forth to win wider renown many great entertainers. The inimitable G. L. Fox was a graduate of the Museum, as were Tony Pastor, Mr. and Mrs.



Lester Wallack, Manager and Actor

Phineas T. Barnum, the Earliest of the Race of Great American Showmen

Barney Williams, George Ketchum, and Hutchins, the Lightning Calculator, known to later generations as the most distinguished member of a profession now extinct —that of the dime museum lecturer.

I am not ashamed to admit that Hutchins' fervid oratory from museum platforms thrilled me even more than had the mathematical feats that had dazzled my youthful mind. Less than five feet in height and holding himself so proudly erect that he seemed to "rake aft," as sailors say, he would make an hourly pilgrimage through the museum with the rabble at his heels held spell-bound by his impressive discourse. It was he who from an inexhaustible vocabulary chose the few simple words that aptly indicated the sufferings of the "Tattooed Man" under the decorating needle: "Ninety thousand stabs and for every stab a tear!"

The peroration with which he invariably brought his discourse to a close in tones of solemn import, rendered doubly impressive by an uplifted hand, still remains in my memory: "And now, ladies and gentlemen, you will return to your homes and seek needful repose with minds filled with awe at the wonders that a beneficent Creator and a liberal management have placed before you for the low sum of ten cents. But whatever you may think regarding the stupendous aggregation of curiosities assembled in this museum for your entertainment and enlightenment, you may go to your beds knowing that all I have said to you is the eternal and everlasting truth. I believe the Fat Lady has a few photographs to sell; ten cents each."

In Judge Daly's life of his brother Augustin Daly,

there is a reference that I doubt if anyone in New York save myself understands. Kate Bateman in writing to Mr. Daly says: "The next time you are in Washington Avenue" and the line brought to my memory the days when the Batemans lived there and the boys, Harry and Dick, were the constant companions of my elder brother and myself. They were the first theatre folk that I ever knew. Kate and her sister Ellen had played for years as the "Bateman Children" and the former had become an adult actress of great distinction. The first time I ever visited the theatre was to see her as Pauline in "The Lady of Lyons" and it was on this occasion that I assisted in a work in which later in life I became quite proficient, namely, that of "papering" a house with free tickets for a first night's performance.

Harry Bateman came to our house that morning with a number of these tickets for distribution. Each one was marked by means of a cork slashed in ingenuous fashion and dipped in lamp-black, for it was in this manner that it was customary to prevent the printer from holding out a supply for himself. For my services in delivering these tickets to friends in the neighborhood I was allowed to see the performance in company with my brother. In later years the elder Bateman established Irving at the London Lyceum Theatre and also brought French opera bouffe to New York in the late Sixties. Kate became the wife of Dr. Crowe and Ellen married an Italian named Greppo who, I believe, introduced the silk business into Paterson. One of the younger sisters became the mother of the writer who signs himself Compton Mackenzie; Harry died in India

many years ago; and Dick perished at sea while on his way to Japan. The whole family were reguiar attendants at St. Luke's Church.

I was five years old when we children began to hear from the lips of our elders mention of a man named Lincoln, whose speech in Cooper Union had provoked much discussion. Many years afterward I chanced to learn that that speech, whose consequences were so far-reaching, was the result of his son's failure to pass a scholastic examination. It happened in this wise. Robert T. Lincoln had come from his Illinois home with the intention of entering Harvard College and had failed in his examinations. His father was much distressed and, although money was by no means plentiful with him, he determined to go to the boy's assistance and accordingly made the journey to Cambridge. While there, one of the committee then arranging for the great Cooper Union meeting suggested the propriety of inviting Mr. Lincoln, whom he had once listened to in the West, to address the assembly, and the invitation was promptly sent. Lincoln would not have gone to the expense of journeying all the way from his home to New York in order to make one brief speech, but as the metropolis could be reached on his way back from Cambridge he decided to stop there, although he feared that his own oratory would be overshadowed by the superior eloquence of the many distinguished men whose presence was expected.

A gentleman who is still living in New York has described to me that Cooper Union meeting at which he himself was present. So little was Mr. Lincoln then

known in the East that William Cullen Bryant, the presiding officer, introduced him in the following words: "We shall next have the pleasure of hearing from Mr. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, of whom some of you have undoubtedly heard." There were indeed some present in the hall who had heard of Mr. Lincoln and his championship of abolition, and for several minutes a storm of howls and hisses prevented him from speaking. But, accustomed as he was to the even noisier demonstrations of the border states, he remained quietly awaiting a chance to make himself heard. Then he began to speak, and at the end of that speech, which placed the Presidential nomination in the hollow of his hand, many of those who had tried to howl him down rushed forward to grasp him by that hand.

CHAPTER II

MEANWHILE the war clouds were gathering, and the attack on Harper's Ferry, which my father, though a strong abolitionist, bitterly deplored as a wanton act, presaged the coming storm. Sumter was fired on and family friends began to appear in uniform. Very soon troops were hurrying to the front and a little later we children were set to picking lint for the hospitals; that is to say unravelling small squares of linen, to be done up in small bundles for the dressing of wounds. Meanwhile Colonel Julius W. Adams, a constant visitor at our house, had organized the First Long Island Regiment and gone south with my uncle Edwin on his staff. New York was ablaze with excitement, the echoes of which reached our quiet avenue. The present site of the downtown New York Post Office was occupied by great wooden barracks, and speculation in gold ran so high that the brokers held a sort of night exchange at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. As the war went on many of the private schools went into uniform, the Polytechnic boys in blue and those of the Brooklyn Heights Institute, where I was studying, in gray. Our drill master was the French teacher, Captain Veiller, a Crimean veteran and we drilled in French as well as in English. Our captain was Archie Brasher, afterward well known in Park Row. The military discipline was an admirable

thing for us all, and I have always believed that our militia should be organized in the public schools, if for no better reason than to subject the boys to the discipline which is most cryingly needed at the present day.

The war feeling was, as I recall it, far more bitter than that which we have lately experienced and it extended to the children. The North was full of Copperheads and the feeling against slavery was by no means unanimous, as the commercial side of the question had its importance. Many southern families continued to live north of Mason and Dixon's line and many of their children were our playfellows. We used to sing a patriotic song containing the lines

> Oh how proud you stood before me,
> In your suit of blue

and for the last word the little southerners would defiantly shout "gray." During the war my uncle, Heber Livermore, married Margie Boteler, a lovely daughter of Virginia, and her presence in our family did much to dissipate our childish belief that all southerners had hoofs and horns. She had not been with us long before I became jealous of my uncle.

I shall never forget the excitement caused by the killing of Lincoln, nor the great wave of popular indignation that swept over the country and for a time seemed to obliterate all party feeling. New York and Brooklyn were hung with black and for days nothing else was talked of. Years afterward I met Robert T. Lincoln, who said that he had been almost on the spot at every Presidential assassination. "I had just returned from

the army the night that my father was killed and, feeling too tired to go with him to the theatre, as he wished, I went to bed and was sleeping soundly when I was awakened and told of the crime. I went at once to the house where he lay and was present when he died. One morning, when I was a member of Garfield's cabinet, I was summoned to meet him at the Pennsylvania Railroad Station as he intended to take a trip to New York. It was while waiting in a side room that I heard a pistol shot and, filled with a terrible foreboding, I exclaimed, 'The President is shot!' and rushed out to find my words true. Many years later I was on my way east from my home in Chicago, and as the train stopped before entering Buffalo, the local superintendent of the Pullman Company, of which I was an official, came into my car to speak to me. His first words were, 'I have sad news for you' and without waiting to hear more I cried out, 'Have they killed the President?' "

During my childhood my taste for the theatre grew steadily, although it was not often in those days that children were permitted to form the theatrical habit. I was about eight years of age when I was taken to Hooley's Minstrels, then the most popular place of amusement in Brooklyn. On this occasion I heard Joe Emmett sing, "Kaiser, don't you want to buy a dog?" and also listened to that historic colloquy regarding the shipwreck ending with, "You say everyone was starving and yet you were eating an egg. How did that happen?" And then, "The ship lay to and I got one." Yes, I heard this at my first minstrel show and also at the last I ever attended. Archie Hughes was also on the bill and years

afterward a boy at our boarding-school used to hold us breathless with an account of how he had once actually spoken to Mr. Hughes and had made bold to wish him a successful season, for which courtesy the minstrel had graciously given thanks.

It was on this occasion that I first saw a "fright wig," the hair of which could be made, by the pulling of a hidden spring, to stand on end as if in sudden fright. I noted also with childish glee the workings of that cornerstone of acrobatic stage humor, the "trick staircase," a collapsible affair designed to facilitate the descent of the comedian. Both these inventions, as I learned much later in life, came from the brain of a man who died holding the position of stage-doorkeeper at the Howard Athenaeum in Boston, and it was while similarly employed in a Philadelphia playhouse that Ethelbert A. Marshall, the earliest of multi-theatre managers, ended his days. That theatrical managers never died rich was a common saying in those days.

It was during the Sixties that Mr. Bateman appeared in New York as the manager of the French Opera Bouffe Company of which Mme. Tostée was the star. His son Harry was treasurer of the company and my brother and I were often entertained at what is now the Fourteenth Street Theatre, then fitted with a circle of boxes as became a fashionable resort.

Opera bouffe, which under Hortense Schneider, led the pace in Paris during the closing years of the Empire, gained a like vogue in New York during the years that followed the Civil War. James Fisk, Jr., who was the very embodiment of the Wall Street spirit of that

time, purchased the Grand Opera House and there installed a French company of his own. His idea was to use the *avant-scène* as a place of entertainment for such political and financial friends as he deemed worthy of propitiation, and for this purpose he constructed a green-room of unusual size and luxury which is, I think, still in existence. Many opera bouffe stars entertained the town with greater or less success after Tostée had shown the way, but the only enduring prosperity was that of Mme. Aimée, who became a nation-wide favorite and never failed to interpolate an English song, "As pretty as a picture," in her performance.

My early training, never quite forgotten, compels me to give due credit to the divinity that shapes our ends, but I cannot blind myself altogether to the occasional interference of the god of chance, to whom may be traced many of the episodes written indelibly on history's page. The adroit handiwork of this deity brought together the various circumstances that gave us *The Black Crook* and thus laid the foundation of the leg drama, whose influence on the modern theatre cannot be overestimated.

Jarrett and Palmer had imported a large ballet with costly and startling costumes—they would not be considered startling now—for the grand opera in New York, but before they could be displayed the Academy of Music burned down and gave to Mr. Charles M. Barras the opportunity of his life. Barras was a dramatist and his plight at this time was that of nearly every other dramatist in this country. That is to say, he was roaming from theatre to theatre vainly trying to inflict a play upon some unwary manager. The play on which he had

based his forlorn hope was an old-fashioned melodrama of the German school, rich in such lines as, "How stands the record of the dying year?" In one of its scenes a character called Dragonfin came shooting up through a star trap, crying excitedly: "There's blood on the moon! Our Queen's in danger! Stay! It's past!" How he came to observe the lunar phases from his perch below the earth no one in the audience sought to ascertain.

The ashes were still smouldering in east Fourteenth Street when Barras precipitated himself into the office of William Wheatley, the manager of Niblo's Garden, and in a few well chosen words unleashed the scheme that was buzzing in his mind.

"Jarrett and Palmer have got this ballet on their hands and don't know what to do with it! Why not take this melodrama of mine that you've refused three times already, change it into a spectacle and put in their ballet and costumes? Mark my words, the combination will startle the town!"

Eventually, this very thing was accomplished and with a result far beyond anything that even the sanguine Barras could have anticipated. Never before had the town seen such an exhibition of legs. Hoopskirts or "tilters" as they were termed, were then in vogue and their revelations, some accidental and others premeditated, had stimulated the public interest in lower limbs as they were politely termed. Nor did this interest lose its zest when the stockings of white cotton or lisle thread were replaced first by those with horizontal stripes and afterward by solid colors.

In *The Black Crook,* women, apparently of dazzling

beauty, showed their legs frankly in silken tights. And the date of this initial display, September 12, 1866, is marked with a red letter in theatrical calendars as the beginning of the great era of the "leg show," an era that has not yet come to an end.

Pauline Markham is so thoroughly identified in the minds of old-time playgoers, with the important part of Stalacta that it is generally supposed that she was in the original cast, whereas she did not arrive in New York until two years later, when she came as a member of Lydia Thompson's troupe. The original Stalacta was Annie Kemp Bowler; George C. Boniface was Rodolphe; J. W. Blaisdell was Count Wolfenstein and Madame Bonfanti was the principal dancer. Other dancers were Betty Rigl, Rita Sangalli and Rose Del Val. The Black Crook himself, a village usurer and magician, was played by an English actor, Arthur Matthison, an uncle of Edith Wynne Matthison. It would be hard for the present generation, accustomed as it is to the generous exhibitions of comic opera and musical comedy, to understand the excitement created by the production of *The Black Crook*. At first the audiences consisted largely of men, but it was not long before feminine curiosity put propriety to flight and women joined the ever-increasing throng. The first of all "bald head rows," the prototype of that which glistens under the rays of the Rentz-Santley organization, filled the seats where the music could be heard most distinctly, and it is a matter of record that opera glasses were more in use than ear-trumpets. After the fall of the curtain the *jeunesse dorée*, to say nothing of a *vieillesse* of like hue, stormed the stage en-

trance, bearing gifts of myrrh, honey and precious ointment in golden caskets.

Never before or since in the history of our stage has such a stream of costly offerings passed through the stage door or over the footlights. Every bunch of flowers was instantly torn to pieces by its eager recipient to see what it contained in the way of jewelry. Years afterward Pauline Markham, then playing her old rôle in a revival of the piece, told me that she had never received so many valuable gifts or so many invitations to supper as she did after Richard Grant White had referred in the *Galaxy Magazine* to her voice as "vocal velvet" and to her arms as the lost ones of the Venus di Milo.

"And," she added sadly, "we thought it would never end."

Meanwhile the clergy were giving material aid to the box office by their denunciations of the indecent display, and there were not a few who deemed it their duty to view the performance themselves—in an unostentatious manner—in order to satisfy themselves that it was as iniquitous as it was said to be.

But it all did end long before the month of March, 1919, when an old lady who for some years had occupied very humble lodgings in West Twenty-third Street passed out of this life. Known to a few neighbors as Mrs. Grant, there was nothing in her manner of living to suggest the gay theatric circles of the Sixties and early Seventies in which she had played such a conspicuous part and not until her death did these chance acquaintances learn that she was Pauline Markham of *The Black Crook.*

Lillian Russell in Her Tony Pastor Days

Pauline Markham, the *Stalacta* of the "Black Crook"

Waves of the *Crook* tumult reached our boarding-school through the lips of one of the boys who had witnessed it during the holidays and when "Vally" Blacque told us that he had actually been behind the scenes of that spectacle and had seen the girls climbing to their perches for the grand transformation scene, I, for one, did not believe him. I did not think it possible for any mere schoolboy—no matter how much older than myself—to enter that mysterious region of delights.

The appearance of Lydia Thompson at Wood's Museum, afterward Daly's Theatre, in September, 1868, and the various companies of "British Blondes" that followed her, imparted a new zest to the leg drama. Miss Thompson appeared in burlesques that were really entertaining, supported by such players as Rose Coghlan, who is still with us, and a perennial delight, Harry Beckett, later one of the best comedians ever seen on the Wallack stage, Lisa Weber and Eliza Weathersby, who lived to become the first of Nat Goodwin's several wives. For years after the first appearance of this troupe, bucolic visitors to New York were wont to enquire as they inscribed their names on the hotel registers: "Be any of them yaller-legged Thompson gals a-showin' in taown to-night?" It is believed that one or two members of these earlier organizations are still roaming the mid-west with the Rentz-Santley Female Minstrel Company, a bit of clear theatrical amber in which is imbedded, and clearly visible to the eye that hoary diversion, the skipping-rope dance, which has come down to us from the banks of the Euphrates where it was first performed with a strip of grapevine.

Almost coincident with the creation of the leg drama was the appearance of a lyrical scourge which swept through the country as no other song has before or since. It was whistled, sung, played and hummed, even by those who could neither play nor sing, in a manner possible only to a song written on a few notes. In the bringing upon us of this pestilence we note another example of the god of chance's handiwork. The authorship of this idiotic lyric has been variously attributed, but on the authority of Colonel T. Allston Brown, whose accuracy in matters of theatrical history is undisputed, I have been able to fix the blame where it rightly belongs. T. Brigham Bishop, who had previously led a blameless life as the author of many of the most popular sentimental, humorous, and patriotic ballads of those minstrelsy days, went to the war in command of a company of colored soldiers. One day he happened to hear one of his sable warriors reply to an inquiry in regard to his health: "I'se feelin' jus' like a mo'nin star." To which the other responded: "I'se feelin' like a frog that's done lost he ma!" And then a disgusted listener exclaimed: "Shoo fly, don't bother me!"

The brief colloquy served as an inspiration to Bishop, and it was not long before crowds began to gather about his camp to hear the darkies singing the new ballad, just as still larger crowds gathered later to hear Dan Bryant sing it in New York.

It remained for Edward E. Rice to "keep alight the sacred lamp of burlesque," as John Hollingshead once said, and he certainly kept it blazing for many years, beginning with that splendid entertainment *Evangeline,*

Lila Webb. Favorite Footlight of the Best Kind of English Burlesque

Miss Kate Bateman, Well Known in Her Day on the English as Well as the American Stage

written by a Boston journalist named Cheever Goodwin, first produced by Mr. Rice in 1872 and seen at Niblo's Garden in New York, two years later. It was as fine a piece of native burlesque as the town had seen since John Brougham's *Pocahontas* of a much earlier day, and it enjoyed a life of constant travel and reproduction for nearly two score of years. It gave Henry E. Dixey his first step on the road to fame as the hind legs of the heifer, and Harry Hunter temporary renown as the "Lone Fisherman." Since then Rice has appeared before the public as the producer of many fine entertainments of like nature, the most successful of which was *Adonis* in which Mr. Dixey played an engagement, then almost unequalled in length and prosperity, at the Bijou, the run extending to more than six hundred consecutive nights, followed by one hundred nights at the Gaiety Theatre in London, where, according to the claim of its producer, it created the British craze for musical comedy which still endures. *Babes in the Woods,* produced at the Union Square Theatre in 1879, was another of Mr. Rice's ventures and it is said of him that in the long course of his managerial career he has given opportunity to more young women of talent than any other impresario of his time. Mr. Rice is still active and has not a gray hair in his head, though the same cannot be said of some of the actors who have played under his management.

As I grew old enough to be allowed to go about by myself, I spent many afternoons and Saturdays at my father's place of business, roaming about the docks among the hogsheads of sugar and molasses and clamber-

ing aboard the ships to make acquaintance with captains and sailors. To this day the odor of spices and pepper awakens memory of those docks and warehouses. At this time steam had not stripped all the romance from the sea, nor had the ocean cables robbed the shipping trade of its element of venture. The harbor was white with sails and the great clipper ships—the *Dreadnaught,* the *Prima Donna,* the *Seminole* and scores of others—were constantly coming and going between San Francisco and New York. We boys used to make collections of pictured shipping cards that announced the dates of sailing. The captains frequently took their wives with them on these long voyages around Cape Horn—a hundred days was a short passage—and I have seen many a cabin that had an atmosphere of domesticity not unlike that of the living-room in a New England farmhouse. It used to be said of the vessels owned by A. A. Low and Company in the China trade, that the profits from a single cargo of tea often paid the entire cost of the ship.

The Volunteer Fire Department had such a strong hold on the people of the city that it must have been a task of the greatest difficulty to replace it in 1866 by the present paid service. The day it went out of existence one of the companies ran its machine into the Harlem River. Citizens of every class belonged to the fire companies and a midnight call would bring them hurrying from their beds to the engine-house. Each company moreover, had its special following of adherents that included within its limits numbers of boys, and these latter had many fistic fights over the merits of the machines that they ran with. It was from this organiza-

tion that the famous Fire Zouaves were recruited during the Civil War and they did good service in many a hard fought battle. So strong was the feeling of brotherhood engendered by the work of fire fighting, that several associations composed of these old volunteers held together for years and were often seen marching in parades. As late as Washington's Birthday of 1920, these veterans, several of whom had gone out under General Hawkins, marched to Union Square and placed their annual wreath on the statute of Washington.

Harry Howard, the one-time chief of the Volunteer Fire Department, remained a popular figure in the life of the town for nearly thirty years after the disbandment of the Volunteer organization and was frequently seen in east side theatres in company with the still unmarried sweetheart of his youth, for the two had become friends after many years of alienation. I was writing for the *New York Journal* at the time of Howard's death, and had some difficulty in persuading the city editor, who owed his job to his known familiarity with San Francisco, to let me prepare a suitable obituary. He objected because nobody had ever heard of him. On the day of Howard's funeral, which chanced to be a rainy Sunday, this editor, glancing out of his window, exclaimed: "Look at that big crowd waiting at the entrance of the bridge! What does it mean?"

To which I answered that it was merely the citizens waiting for the funeral procession of the man that nobody had ever heard of.

CHAPTER III

MY childhood came to an end with the close of the war, and at the age of twelve I was sent to a boarding-school in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where I remained for a number of years. There I learned something and made enduring friendships. My room-mate was Thomas W. Harvey, now the leading physician of Orange, New Jersey, and among my young friends were "Billy" Prall, now a retired clergyman; Horace G. Young, who afterward became the manager of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company; Valentine Blacque, the son of the Turkish Minister in Washington; Willard and Benny Butler of the well known New York family; George E. Munroe, now a physician in New York; and Horace McVicker, the son of the theatrical manager of Chicago. Horace introduced the pleasing custom of dining with one foot on the table.

I had been reared under excellent literary influences, for our family had always been lovers of good books, and it was at this school that my taste was so far developed as to influence my choice in later years of the profession of letters. Moreover it was here that I gained my first worldly experiences, for a boarding-school of half a hundred boys is a world in miniature and from my contact with my fellows I learned many valuable lessons and suffered much mortification when my selfishness or conceit earned me well-merited rebukes.

I was one of the very small boys during my first year and looked up with awe to such giants of stature and knowledge as Sam Sinclair, whose father was the publisher of the *New York Tribune;* Walter Scranton, whose family gave their name to the Pennsylvania town; Richard Gorham, a sweet tenor singer; and Parker Chandler of Boston. Among the companions of my own age were Harvey, Malcolm and Harry Douglas, Lewis and Joe English of New Haven, John and Julian Kean of New Jersey, Duncan Oliphant and his brother, Charles, and Dick Colgate of soap renown. Isaac Bell, Edgar Fawcett and Louis C. Tiffany antedated me but still lived in school tradition. My friends in later years included Samuel Adams of Canaan, Connecticut; Harold Godwin of New York, Arthur Dix Temple, Miguel Martinez, of Spanish birth; Charley, the last of the Delmonico dynasty, and Lascelles Maxwell of the well-known Brooklyn family. There were forty-four boys in the school and five baseball nines, an athletic teacher playing on the first nine, and this and other out-door sports must have done us much good, for a year ago I read over the list of names on an old school circular and of the boys mentioned in it, one-third I knew to be living, one-third dead and the others I had lost track of.

Tom Harvey had a friend in East Canaan, Connecticut, in the person of a kind and sweet-faced old lady whom we called "Auntie Fox" and with whom we spent more than one holiday. I remember these visits not only because we were allowed to make pancakes on the kitchen range and I was encouraged to recite poetry, an art in which I deemed myself proficient, but also because

of a glimpse that I obtained into Yankee greed, a quality that has not disappeared altogether from the New England States. At this time the Connecticut Western Railroad was in course of construction and giving employment to thousands of Irish workmen. There was probably no code of liquor laws in the state at this time or, if there were, they were not strictly enforced for scores of farmers opened bar-rooms, usually among the horse-hair furniture of their "best room," and proceeded to profit by the invasion of the thirsty multitude. I remember that one of these temporary saloons was opened by the custodian of the local hearse in the loft directly above the quarters occupied by that vehicle of woe.

Edwards Place School, as it was called—the main building had been the home of Jonathan Edwards—was conducted by Ferdinand Hoffmann, a highly educated German; and Jared Reid, the father of the artist, Robert, of to-day. It was the first-named who told us that Nathaniel Hawthorne was the greatest literary man that America had produced, and thus implanted in my mind an opinion that I have never had reason to change. I cannot say that any of my school-mates won deathless fame in later life, but several of them lived to become prosperous and highly respected citizens. Hindman Barney, the tallest boy in the school, seemed to us smaller fry a marvel of size and worldly sophistication as he had been twice to Europe and had even crossed in the Great Eastern, an exploit which we deemed much to his credit. It was currently reported that he shaved, and a brilliant

future was predicted for him. After leaving school he became an actor, lost an arm in a drunken quarrel, and, when I last heard of him, he was traveling with a temperance lecturer as the "Awful Example."

What dreams we had in those far-off days, my schoolmates and I! And how many of those dreams, I wonder, have ever been realized! I am quite sure that each of us saw himself in his own dream at the very top of his chosen vocation. I know I did. By this time I had fallen under the spell of Thackeray and a resolve to become a man of letters was slowly taking shape in my brain. Then there came a moment when I informed my room-mate that I would read Thackeray no more lest future critics should say that my manner of writing resembled his. No one has yet brought this charge against me. I wish somebody would. Wealth, fame, the esteem and envy of our fellow-men, and possibly in the case of the bigger boys, the love of fair women, figured in all our dreams, but I doubt if any of us dreamt of those priceless assets of later life, a good digestion and a sound set of teeth.

Stockbridge was then a village of great beauty and dignity, though it could not boast of the costly mansions that now adorn it. It had a literary history that was quite unusual. The Sedgwicks had lived there for many years as had G. P. R. James and Jonathan Edwards. In the neighborhood of the village, going as far as Lenox, Longfellow, Herman Melville, and, I believe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, had formerly dwelt, and memories of the Hawthornes and Fanny Kemble were still fresh in my boyhood's days. The daughter of Har-

riet Beecher Stowe was the wife of the Episcopal rector in our village and her son Charles, now an Episcopal clergyman, was at our school. The rector's wife, Mrs. Henry M. Allen, was a vivacious young woman who fascinated me with her witty conversation and kindly sympathy with boyish nature. I was allowed to visit her frequently and I have no doubt that I bored her a great many times. It was at her house that I met Mrs. Stowe, whose face and manner I can still vividly recall.

The fame of the Field family is identified with that of Stockbridge. Cyrus and David were frequent visitors there and Jonathan and the Rev. Henry M. Field still maintained homes in the village. Mrs. Henry M. Field, whom I knew slightly, as a boy might be permitted to know a woman so much his superior in years and distinction, had played a part in one of the most notable tragedies of her age. Swiss by birth she had become the governess in the family of the Duc de Choiseul-Praslin, who subsequently murdered his wife, was convicted of the crime, and was believed to have committed suicide in his cell. The rumor that he had been allowed to escape execution because of his high position spread among the Parisians and helped to precipitate the revolution of 1848. The governess was tried for complicity in the crime and Mrs. Field afterward told her friends in this country that when she was being conveyed to the courtroom the gendarmes were obliged to form a ring around her carriage and fight their way through the maddened crowd.

In New York she occupied a high social position and showed herself an adept in the art of retaliatory speech.

It is related that having embroiled herself with Mrs. Cyrus Field she found herself one evening unexpectedly face to face with Mrs. Cyrus and to the latter's affable question, "and why is not dear Henry here to-night?" she made prompt reply in a voice that carried to the farthest extremity of the room: "Dear Henry is not here because he is at home writing speeches for Cyrus to deliver in Europe." I am glad to add that Mrs. Field gave noteworthy assistance to Peter Cooper in the early days of Cooper Union.

In recent years I have more than once revisited this beautiful region, around which cluster so many happy memories, and have been saddened by the changes wrought by the "march of improvement" that has been going on since those boyhood days. Modern wealth had marked the countryside for its own and the literary atmosphere of olden times was now but a fading memory. The lake in whose waters we used to fish and on whose shore the Hawthorne cottage once stood seemed to me to stagger under the deadening weight of ornate mansions that fittingly symbolized the newly acquired fortunes from which they sprang. One consoling thought remained to me as I viewed these evidences of the material prosperity that had arisen arrogantly from the ashes of far better things. In the decades yet to come, I said to myself, when those fortunes shall have crumbled away, as have those of my boyhood; when those great estates shall have been divided and the huge mansions turned into hotels or asylums, and then the proceeds shall have passed through the hands of the lawyers and the remainder distributed among the heirs and by them

squandered in riotous living, even then that which went forth from that little red cottage on the lake's shore will enter into the souls of men.

A change in the family fortunes led to my removal from school and shortly afterward we left Brooklyn for good. Although not given to superstition I feel bound to relate the following. My father had prospered in business and, as it had always been his purpose to live in New York where he had many friends, he made a careful survey of the real estate field and finally purchased the home at 21 West Nineteenth Street. It had been built by General Fremont, regarded in his day as an unlucky politician, and was a wide, well-built and altogether comfortable residence with a vacant lot on either side. It was, however, known to real estate men as an unlucky house that had carried ill fortune with it ever since a woman hanged herself from one of the upper banisters overlooking its wide hall. Before we could move into it, my father had, through no fault of his own, lost his lease of the Pierrepont Stores and we removed temporarily to the little village of Windham, Connecticut. He rented the house to a Mrs. Sanger who let out the rooms in lodgings but was constantly losing her tenants and servants because of the strange happenings on the premises. She told me once of her hair-raising experience with a mysterious shape that passed her one evening in the hall and so frightened a little dog in her arms that the animal had a convulsive fit. Eventually my father sold the house to Dr. May and the later misfortunes of that family are a matter of local history. It was here that Mr. James Gordon Ben-

Century-old Inn on Windham Green. The Author and J. Alden Weir Standing in the Foreground

Windham Bank on the Upper Side of the Village Green

nett, then engaged to Miss May, laid the foundation for his assault by Fred May in front of the Union Club. And it was in this house that a heart-broken woman killed herself and her children some years subsequently. There was never any luck in that house and it was eventually torn down and replaced by a loft building.

Windham was a typical old-fashioned New England village, settled nearly two hundred years before our arrival and boasting a cemetery in which reposed one of its earliest settlers, an Englishman who was supposed to have been one of the Regicides and who bequeathed to a local church a beautiful service of silver, which was melted in later years and refashioned in more modern style.

Built in accordance with ancient custom around a central tree-shaded green, the village had been a place of some importance in the days of the stage-coach, having several stores and many ancient traditions. It is known to this day as "Frogtown" because on a certain night during the Revolution, the noisy croaking of a number of frogs migrating from one pond to another frightened the community into a belief that the British army was approaching with hostile intent.

My cousin Sim and I entered into all the rustic sports with the zest of youth, skating and coasting in the winter, nutting in the autumn, swimming and ball-playing in the summer and in late spring hanging May-baskets on the doors of the girls whom we most affected. Our affairs of the heart sometimes led to animosity and I still retain a corroding memory of that bitter night when Sim walked off with the girl whom I regarded as my

exclusive property. I watched them sulkily as they passed and heard her burst into a peal of laughter at some remark of her companion's. "She thinks that fellow is funny," I said to myself. "Just let her wait till tomorrow night and I'll show her what it is to be really funny!" It did not occur to me that at that moment I was funnier than he was.

There were two characters in the village of whom I learned certain things much later in life that would have greatly surprised me could I have known them in the days when Sim and I used to play croquet on the village green. One of these characters was the manager of the local bank, a picturesque building of gray stone whose very aspect suggested conservatism and financial integrity. Well known for his personal dignity and probity, this man was perhaps the most eminent inhabitant of the place. The other character was the village half-wit named John Collins, who did odd jobs around the hotel and was always glad to entertain strangers by playing on a mouth organ with an accompaniment of knuckles rapped harmoniously on the bar. From this picturesque old bank graduated more than one young clerk who, in after years, came to grief as a defaulter, and of this fact I was reminded long years afterward on the occasion of a visit to Ludlow Street Jail in company with George Parsons Lathrop, with whom I was preparing a descriptive article.

Among the prisoners whom we interviewed was a distinctly presentable man of about thirty, who accosted Lathrop and recalled a previous meeting at the house of the latter's brother-in-law, Julian Hawthorne. Our ac-

quaintance related this story as he had had it from the lips of Ferdinand Ward, who had recently been an inmate of the jail.

"I was sitting at my desk one morning," said Ward to our informant, "wondering how much longer I should be able to hold out when a stranger entered, introduced himself as the manager of a New England bank and remarked that he had a little money to invest should a favorable opportunity offer. Certain friends of his, he added, had done very well through my office and he asked if he might have a share in one of my blind pools.

"At this time I was in a very tight hole; the Marine Bank of my associate, Mr. Fish, was on the edge of suspension and I was at my wit's end trying to devise schemes for keeping afloat a little longer in the hope that the luck would turn. But of course no one, least of all this man in front of me, dreamt that I was in such a bad fix. About all I had left to go on was my nerve and that's a big asset in the sort of business I was engaged in. I saw that he was a rather timid and cautious chap so I stood him off, saying that I was only interested in one deal at the moment and when I'd pulled that off I intended to retire from business altogether. He asked me if he could get in on that deal but I told him I had about all the money I needed and so we talked until at last he got anxious and literally forced his money—about $30,000—on me, for which I gave him a receipt, but did not tell him what I intended to do with it; nor for that matter did he ask.

"He turned up again a few weeks later and although

I recognized his face I could not remember what transaction I had had with him. I seemed to remember that money had passed between us, in which event it must have been from his pocket to mine, for that was the only way money was moving in my office at that time. I greeted him pleasantly and talked with him for several minutes, trying to size him up and also to remember who he was.

"At last I said, 'I think we've got a little business matter to adjust, haven't we?' and straightway he produced the receipt I'd given him. That gave me his name and the amount of his investment, so I took down a huge ledger and began to make notes on a pad, all the time asking myself if it would pay to try and pull him in deeper. Something in the look of his face told me it would and I called to my cashier to make out a cheque for—I've forgotten the exact sum but it was not far from double what he'd put up, and it was figured down to the odd cents so as to make it look honest and exact. Then I got busy with some letters just as if I was glad to get such a small matter off my mind and as I wrote I could hear him breathing hard.

" 'Suppose I were to leave this money with you,' he began, but I stopped him short. 'You're one of the lucky ones,' I said. 'Take my advice and be content with what you've made. Besides I don't care to handle any more small funds.'

"So he took himself off, but I knew I'd see him again soon and sure enough he turned up again in less than a week, this time in company with some other Connecticut bankers, all eager to invest. And the cheque that the

original sucker turned in to me was the one I'd given him. It was drawn on the Marine Bank and he'd had it certified not knowing that the certification wasn't worth the red ink it was printed with."

And then I learned to my amazement that the holder of that certified cheque was none other than the man I had known in boyhood as the manager of the Windham Bank.

Shortly after hearing this recital, I learned that my old friend John Collins had also distinguished himself in a manner characteristic of himself in the field of finance. He was giving lectures on various abstruse financial subjects, which he doubtless understood as well as certain academic philosophers, at various crossroad forums in the vicinity of Windham. During the long summer evenings his voice was often raised in behalf of cheap money or some novel scheme of taxation. Nor did the fact that his winters were spent in the County Poor House lessen his vogue as a local authority on finance.

CHAPTER IV

MY boyhood was passed during what a local chronicler has aptly termed the "Flash Age of New York," a period of crime, reckless extravagance, political corruption and false prosperity engendered by the Civil War, the inflation of the currency and the rapid rise of contractors and others from poverty to wealth. Its annals are punctuated with murders, bank robberies, spectacular Wall Street gambling and the doings of many bizarre characters. It was during this time that the illegal registration, naturalization and colonization of voters, carried on during and subsequent to 1867, enabled William M. Tweed and his gang to organize and accomplish the most extraordinary scheme of municipal robbery that the world has record of. Their doings were well known to the sophisticated but no public notice was taken of them until Jimmy O'Brien, a disappointed politician, obtained all the figures relating to the building and furnishing of the new Court House and brought them, together with other evidences of wholesale robbery, to the office of the *New York Times,* where their publication created a profound sensation and awakened the leading men of the city to action. Tweed's nonchalant reply, "What are you going to do about it?" when charged with malfeasance in office is a historic saying and plainly indicates his attitude toward the people. And yet I have learned on good authority that Mr.

Jones, the owner of the *Times,* was offered a million dollars to suppress the revelation and that Thomas Nast refused a hundred thousand dollars which he could have had by ceasing to cartoon Tweed and the gang in *Harper's Weekly.* "My constituents can't read but they can all look at pictures," said the Boss of New York.

A spectacular personage at this period and one who could almost be said to represent the spirit of the "Flash Age," was James Fisk, Jr., who had begun life as a silk pedler in New England, driving a four-horse equipage from village to village and selling his wares with a glib, persuasive tongue that eventually brought him an offer from the firm of Jordan, Marsh and Company of Boston, whence he shortly migrated to New York and became the partner of Jay Gould. Fisk delighted in showing himself to the public. It was his habit to put on naval uniform and go down to the pier to start the Fall River boats and the *Grand Republic,* which ran to Long Branch, on their several ways. On fine afternoons he could be seen on Fifth Avenue in a four-in-hand brake filled with gaudily bedizened and painted women. On these occasions he received the respectful and admiring salutations of citizens of a kind that would laugh at him to-day. His chief rival in this sort of exhibition was a quack doctor named Helmbold, whose cumbrous vehicle was drawn by five horses.

Fisk's quarrel with Edward S. Stokes grew out of the latter's attentions to Josie Mansfield, whom the former had established in a house on West Twenty-third Street, conveniently near the Grand Opera House, where the Erie Railway had its offices. Miss Mansfield

unquestionably favored Stokes, a fact that her protector was not slow to discover. She tried to pump him once regarding the probabilities of the stock market and he, suspecting her game, imparted to her, under a solemn promise of secrecy, a tip that cost Stokes many thousand dollars and materially increased the bitterness between the pair. But it was not on account of Josie Mansfield that Stokes killed his rival in the Grand Central Hotel. He had the best of his rival in that affair and there was no reason for such a killing. It was Fisk's illegal seizure of the other's oil refineries at Hunter's Point that aroused him to this act of vengeance.

Fisk certainly caught the popular fancy of his day to an extent that seems remarkable to us now. His pictures were seen everywhere and he was known to be a free liver, a liberal spender of money and a diligent patron of the stage in its baser form. His virtues were fitly commemorated in a song with this refrain:

> He may have done wrong but he thought he done right,
> And he always was good to the poor.

For years after his death the brass bands of circus companies exhibiting in the Vermont village where he was buried visited the local cemetery and played a dirge over his grave.

Stokes was tried three times and finally sentenced to Sing Sing for a short term of years and while there enjoyed such privileges as are impossible to-day. Josie Mansfield left New York immediately after the murder and established herself in Paris where she remained until her death a few years ago.

Josie Mansfield, for Whose Favor Stokes and Fisk Fought

Weber and Fields in the Early Days of Their Career

Another murder that attracted much attention at this time and still ranks as one of the unsolved of the city's many mysteries, was that of an elderly and highly respected Hebrew named Nathan in his home on West Twenty-third Street directly opposite the Fifth Avenue Hotel. His son Washington was accused of the crime, but among Hebrews of the high class to which the Nathans belonged, the respect for the parent amounts to veneration and it is impossible to believe him guilty. Years afterward, Abe Hummel told me that a man whose name was, I think, Forrester, was arrested on suspicion and sent at once for that astute criminal lawyer. To him he confessed that he had escaped from San Quentin prison in California, and begged to be sent back there without delay.

"I have often been retained," said Mr. Hummel, "to keep a man out of prison but now for the first time in my career I was employed to send one back, and I have never seen a happier man than was this one when he started for the Pacific Coast in company with the officers of the law."

Many other crimes occurred during the "Flash Age" and the later Seventies, for the boast was openly made that "hanging is played out in New York." The Rogers murder, the killing of Matt Dancer, a well known gambler, are still, I believe, unsolved mysteries. Such operations as bank burglary were held in much higher esteem during the Sixties and Seventies than at present, and the most distinguished members of the craft were known by sight and pointed out to interested strangers. Electrical devices had not then robbed the profession of its

romance, as steam and the cable have since robbed shipping, and the skill and daring of the marauders appealed strongly to the minds of the venturesome.

There is still standing, I believe, a little two-story house at the corner of Clinton and Rivington Streets, which was for many years the headquarters of some of the greatest criminals in the country and in which many of the most daring robberies of the period were planned. The front part of the ground floor was devoted to the sale of cheap dry-goods but the parlor in the rear contained many articles of furniture and silver of a sort seldom seen in that quarter of the town. It was in this room that "Mother Mandelbaum," as she was affectionately termed by more than one generation of crooks, transacted business. A. C. Wheeler, better known as "Nym Crinkle," once told me of a visit that he paid to Mrs. Mandelbaum in her parlor and how adroitly she eluded all his efforts to question her. He told me also how she produced from some musty corner of her cellar, cobwebbed bottles of rare wines and how, as the talk grew more and more interesting, the accent of the unlettered German Jewess gradually disappeared from her tongue and he left her in the belief that she was a most remarkable woman and one better educated than was generally supposed.

Mrs. Mandelbaum was a receiver of stolen goods, her place of business a market in which jewelry, rolls of silk, silverware and other spoils could be disposed of for about half their real value, the old lady assuming all the risks of the transaction. Short, squat and ugly, she looked as if she might have stepped out of the pages of a

Viennese comic paper, yet she was a sort of female Moriarty who could plan a robbery, furnish the necessary funds for carrying it out and even choose the man best fitted to accomplish it.

And among all the men who frequented her little parlor, there was but one for whom she ever showed any affection. This was George Leonidas Leslie, generally known as "Howard," the son of a well-to-do western brewer, a graduate of one of the smaller universities and the possessor of a fine mind and an agreeable personality. In the course of about a dozen years he is said to have participated in robberies amounting to millions of dollars. He lived on Fulton Street, Brooklyn, in the same house with a highly respected theatrical family with whom he and his wife were on intimate terms.

Every day Howard would cross the ferry to New York and while there divide his time between Mrs. Mandelbaum's back parlor, a certain Grand Street saloon frequented by crooks, and the old bookstores of Nassau Street, where he was known as a discriminating purchaser. An expert mechanic, he never saw a complicated lock without wanting to pick it and more than once he obtained employment in a safe factory in order to add to his knowledge.

One morning, early in June, 1878, his body was found lying in a bit of Westchester woods, the dead hand clutching a pistol, though it was soon discovered that the fatal shot had been fired by another weapon. Thousands viewed the body without recognizing it and it was not until Mrs. Mandelbaum sent one of her henchmen up to see it, that the authorities learned that it was

George Howard, presumably murdered by one of his pals; and of all his stealings there remained nothing but the five-dollar bill he had given his wife the last time he left her, and it was Mrs. Mandelbaum who paid the cost of the funeral. And after it was all over, and she had brought the widow back to her home, this hard-faced, crime-laden old woman sat rocking herself to and fro and muttering over and over again: "Poor Shorge, he vas such a nais man!"

Two of Mrs. Mandelbaum's intimates, Billy Porter, suspected of Howard's murder, and Michael Kurtz, known as "Sheeney Mike," figured in a story of a later period which has to do with one of the most remarkable of European robberies.

Early in the Eighties a young American actor went to London with a play entitled, "Fun in a Photograph Gallery," and there repeated the success he had made in New York. While there he was introduced to two gentlemen of pleasing manners who soon became regular frequenters of the very comfortable, well furnished rooms in which he had established himself. The time came when, without a word of good-bye, these ever-welcome visitors effaced themselves from the scene and for two or three weeks were seen there no more. Then came the news of the great Vienna postal robbery which still lives in criminal annals, and a day or two later the two gentlemen walked into the player's apartment where he was entertaining another actor and one Dolly Adams, a water queen, who spent much of her time in a glass tank eating bananas and smoking cigars under water. "Sheeney Mike" took off his silk hat, removed a false

lining and, stirring up a heap of jewels that it contained said to her, "Vell, Dolly, how vould you like some of these?" The criminal's known weakness for the feminine sex had led him to this virtual confession of a crime of unusual magnitude that had been "pulled off" successfully by men as yet unsuspected.

Another of Mrs. Mandelbaum's gang was Mark Shinburn, who, having amassed a fortune through years of bank burglary, returned to his native Germany, bought an ancient castle on the Rhine, obtained in some way the title of baron and set himself up as a man of means and leisure. But gambling and lavish expenditure brought his treasury to such a low ebb that he visited a town in Belgium in which he knew that there was a bank rich in deposits of gold and notes, and insecurely guarded. In company with a man named "Piano-Charlie Bullard," he attempted to rob this bank but was caught, tried and sentenced to a term of imprisonment that brought his career in his Rhenish castle to a close, and the last I heard of him he was living in great poverty in the vicinity of Boston. Crooks are notoriously close-mouthed in regard to their own operations or those of their pals, and although this man might obtain a large sum for his reminiscences, nothing will induce him to put his pen to paper.

The criminal annals of these times are rich in anecdotal lore showing the cunning and courage that marked so many deeds of darkness, among which was the novel enterprise of the so-called "Patchen Avenue gang" composed of high grade crooks, every one of whom was known by sight and record to the New York police and

some of them to the sophisticated public as well. The operations of these men were hampered by the constant surveillance of the police to whom their various haunts, homes and "hang-outs" were well known, nor did frequent changes of address lessen the "shadowing." Heretofore their migrations had always been from one shady spot to another, and when they sought to escape attention by establishing new headquarters in the suburbs they were wont to select a house whose very remoteness was suggestive of mystery.

In order to escape this continued espionage they determined to defy all criminal tradition by establishing a rendezvous in some locality to which no sinister suspicion could attach, and the house that they selected was one with an ample garden in Patchen Avenue, a quiet residential street in Brooklyn. For a time the scheme worked well. The wife of one of the gang was a very presentable woman and to her were assigned the duties of mistress of the house. It was agreed from the first that an atmosphere of quiet respectability should be carefully maintained. Neighbors called and were graciously received by an amiable hostess. Neither peeking through shutters nor the furtive scurrying of wary feet was allowed on these occasions and in due time the calls were returned in a manner that confirmed the belief that the new-comers were desirable acquaintances. They had many visitors of their own kind who invariably came and went in broad daylight, for by common consent all mysterious, midnight flitting to and fro was strictly forbidden.

And under cover of this mask of decorum all sorts of nefarious, predatory schemes were hatched and later

carried to successful fulfilment. A sense of complete security, to which they were utterly unaccustomed, grew upon the little household and as spring advanced they set out a croquet set on the lawn and played openly within sight of their neighbors. But it was this innocent diversion that proved their ruin for religious prejudice was a stranger to them and one fatal Sunday morning passing church-goers were amazed and shocked at the sight of their supposedly decent neighbors busy with mallet and ball. Never since the battle of Long Island was fought had such an abhorrent spectacle been seen in the staid City of Churches. Suspicion was instantly aroused; the New York police were notified and plain-clothes men paid a domiciliary visit to Patchen Avenue which resulted in the closing of the house and the disappearance of its inmates from the scene.

I fear me that those who worship the Golden Calf in preference to all other gods will find but little in these memoirs to interest them for I shall have not much to say about the rich men of my time. Indeed, when I consider that there are more of these idolaters in this country than in any other save England, it is with feelings of shame that I confess that I probably know fewer men of great wealth than any New Yorker of my experience and opportunities for acquaintanceship.

But, though I did not know them personally, I must take note of certain rich men of commercial achievement and sober habit who figured conspicuously in the life of the town in my younger days. Cornelius Vanderbilt was nearing the end of his remarkable career and could be seen nearly every afternoon behind a pair of

swift trotters speeding uptown to Judge Smith's or to some other popular roadhouse. Behind his residence on Washington Place was his stable, and between the two buildings a ring where he was wont to have his horses exercised while he watched them from his piazza. The boys of the neighborhood, among whom was my friend Gibson of *Puck,* used to be glad enough when they were allowed to exercise "Mountain Boy," and other favorite animals in the old Commodore's presence. Mr. Vanderbilt's knowledge of horseflesh was inherited by his son William H. Vanderbilt, who in later years developed remarkable skill in the selection and matching of driving pairs. A trainer told me once that if Mr. Vanderbilt had not been a millionaire he might have become the leading professional horseman of the country.

A man much better known to the general public of his day was Peter Cooper, whose career may be traced back to the first decade of the Nineteenth Century where it joined hands with that of John Jacob Astor. At that time young Cooper's father followed the trade of a hatter, and to his shop the first of the Astors came many a time with a wheelbarrow load of rabbit-skins to be turned into felt. Here we find the beginnings of the man who was destined to become the most important influence in popular education and humanitarianism that the town has yet known, and of the founder of the most enduring dynasty of wealth and social distinction in this country.

Mr. Cooper first awakened my personal interest when as a clerk in the *Railroad Gazette* office, I was sent on an errand to the office of the chief engineer of the elevated

railroad, then in course of construction. While I was cooling my heels in the outer office, Mr. Cooper entered, literally dragging by the arm a young man of seedy appearance who bore with him what I was quick to recognize as the model of an invention. The philanthropist was quickly admitted to the official presence and as he and his companion passed through the door I heard him say: "Here is a young man who has made a most remarkable invention. I demand that you give him a hearing."

He had brought the youthful inventor all the way downtown in his one-horse chaise and I could not help wondering if there was another man of wealth in the city who would have done as much for an impoverished and unknown youth.

Broadway contained no more familiar sight than Mr. Cooper and his one-horse chaise. Teamsters, carriage and omnibus-drivers, many of them rough men who used to fight one another with their whips, never failed to give him the right of way. They accorded him the same honor in 1882 when he made the trip for the last time through a thoroughfare from which every vehicle was withdrawn, not because of municipal orders but through a general desire to show fitting honor to the dead. Not since the mock funeral of General Washington, which this humanitarian had himself witnessed in boyhood, had such a tribute been paid to departed worth.

A contemporary of Mr. Cooper's, and one whose character and career were in marked contrast to his, was Alexander T. Stewart, the founder of what was in its day New York's greatest drygoods business. Within my

own memory Stewart's retail store was situated at Broadway and Chambers Street in the building now occupied by the Munsey publications. Toward the end of his life the great merchant declared that the one commercial mistake of his career had been moving to a place as far downtown as the present site of the Wanamaker store. Another mistake that he made, which he did not live to acknowledge, was in persistently opposing the laying of street car tracks on Broadway, against which project he declared that he was willing to fight to the extent of a million dollars. Time has shown, however, that the present line of street cars, making the store accessible to customers from all parts of the city, has added enormously to the value of the holding. When built, the structure contained the first elevator that I can recall, but Mr. Cooper had, as far back as 1859, forestalled the invention by providing Cooper Union with a shaft running from roof to basement and declaring that some one would come along soon and invent an elevator to fit it.

Stewart was a mean man from the north of Ireland and in comparing him and Mr. Cooper we are strengthened in our belief that Providence occasionally shows a guiding hand in mundane affairs. Everything that the philanthropist left behind him prospered. His son became Mayor of New York as did his son-in-law, Mr. Hewitt, and although he invested the bulk of his fortune in the Union and his descendants have since then added nearly three million to its endowment, the family is by no means impoverished.

Stewart, on the other hand, left nothing behind him

that pleasantly recalls his memory except the Garden City Cathedral and the Park Avenue Hotel, and the latter was diverted from its original purpose as a working-women's home to commercial use by his executors. Of his fortune, practically nothing remains, and the huge marble home that he erected on the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue has long since disappeared. For years it was the home of his widow, a solitary and desolate figure in all that grandeur. As for the business that he created, it passed through the hands of more than one merchant before it was purchased by Mr. Wanamaker. So little was Stewart esteemed that the stealing of his body from its grave created a sensation but failed to arouse popular sympathy.

The fortunes acquired during the Civil War and the early years of the "Flash Age" gave to some of their possessors social ambitions that made them conspicuous in the outer circles of a society firmly established in ante-bellum days. The new-comers sought to advance themselves by means of costly entertainments that taxed the extreme limits of their insecure visiting lists. And it was their frequent need of dancing men that furnished one Brown, the sexton of Grace Church, with a golden opportunity of which he was not slow to avail himself. He mobilized a corps of fairly presentable youths who could dance, known as "Brown's young men," and supplied them as required just as the caterer filled his orders for ice cream and creamed oysters. Brown's young men were a product and symbol of the period in which they flourished, and with the close of that era they vanished from the carpeted floors that their nimble feet had trod.

Local legendry, however, affirms that one or two of them subsequently climbed to loftier social heights through marriage with heiresses whose waists they had clasped in the dance.

During the early Seventies the direful work of replacing the city's comfortable old-fashioned hotels with structures then considered modern began with the building of the Windsor and the Buckingham. I think the Grand Central, now the Broadway Central, dates from the late Sixties, for it was there that Stokes shot Fisk. We young fellows declared all three to be marvels of taste and luxury, and the Buckingham still remains an excellent house. The Windsor, erected on the site of the old skating pond, was destroyed by fire some years ago, but the Broadway Central is an interesting survival of a hostelry of half a century past. Its bar with its regiment of expert drink-mixers has of course vanished, but its main hall and lobby, paved with marble, its huge dining-room, in which meals on the now obsolete American plan are served by bands of colored waiters, and the vast expanse of sleeping chambers on its upper floors make it well worth the study of the local archaeologist and antiquarian.

The crusade thus inaugurated did not end until travelers found themselves housed in those gaudy modern structures whose rooms are like cracks in the earth with wall-paper on them. Gone are the old New York Hotel with its quiet courtyard, the Clarendon, Everett, St. Nicholas and historic Astor House, in every one of which the guest could sit before an open fire in his own room. It must be admitted, however, that in no respect has

New York shown such marked material progress as in the evolution of the convenient and luxurious apartment house from the dark tenement of my early days. The first of these apartments were called "French flats" and philosophers of that day predicted that "French flats" were the precursors of French morals, and I am not sure whether that prophecy has been fulfilled or not. The earliest apartment house that I recall was the Haight House, rebuilt from the old time residence of the family of that name at the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifteenth Street; the Stuyvesant, in Eighteenth Street, west of Third Avenue, and one on the south side of Thirteenth Street, west of Second Avenue. Of these the Stuyvesant alone remains.

New York was already on the way to become a leader in letters as she was then in the fine arts. For this was the age of what has been called the "North River school" of artists, often sneered at by those who style themselves "moderns" but nevertheless worthy of an honored place in the history of the city's artistic development. One of the most conspicuous of these was Albert Bierstadt, whose huge canvas, "The Heart of the Andes," was exhibited with almost sensational success and is now, I am told, reposing in a museum in one of the smaller Vermont towns. Other artists of this school who were among my father's friends were S. R. Gifford, Frederick E. Church, Worthington Whittredge, John F. Kensett and George H. Hall. Henry K. Brown, who made the first and perhaps the best equestrian statue ever erected in New York, that of Washington in Union Square, frequently came to our house, and I remember going with

my father as a very small boy to call on a sculptor whom he predicted would live to enjoy great fame and whose name was J. Q. A. Ward. Artists trod a stony path, for book and magazine illustrations offered scant opportunity and small recompense for pot-boiling. Therefore they used to earn a little extra money by painting the panels in the Broadway omnibuses and many of these now forgotten landscapes though unsigned were from the brushes of artists of later high distinction.

Boston was the literary centre of the country during New York's "Flash Age" and the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* may be said to have held the tuning fork which set the literary pitch for the nation. Henry James and William D. Howells were laying the foundations of their fame, and Mark Twain and Bret Harte were looming up in the far west. There were two houses in New York which were conspicuous because of the celebrities entertained there. One of these was that of Mrs. Vincenzo Botta, a Connecticut poetess wedded to an Italian scholar. Mrs. Botta made a specialty of foreign singers, actors and artists, and her drawing-room often contained men and women of the highest distinction, Americans as well as foreigners. The other house was the home of Alice and Phoebe Cary, writers of genuine ability who had come from Ohio to New York and may be named as among the earliest of our succession of literary women. They made many friends here and their habit of entertaining them on Sunday evening was regarded by the conservative element with distinct disapproval.

But if Boston claimed pre-eminence in the world of letters, New York was not lacking in writers of distinc-

tion, for it numbered among its citizens such men as William Cullen Bryant, R. H. Stoddard, George William Curtis, E. C. Stedman, George Bancroft and Bayard Taylor. Mr. Bryant occupied for many years and until his death in 1878 a high place in the esteem of the town, for he was not only a poet and the editor of the *Evening Post,* but was also prominent in civic matters.

The esteem in which Mr. Bryant was held by persons of the highest repute was evidenced in the so-called "Bryant Festival," in his honor on the occasion of his seventieth birthday in November, 1864. At this festival there were addresses, poems and letters read or delivered, not only by his associates in the club, but by men and women of such renown as Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, Catharine Sedgwick, George H. Boker, Goldwin Smith and others.

A group of writers very different from those to be found within the *Century* walls was that known as "the Pfaff crowd" whose headquarters were in the beer cellar of a Swiss publican and who styled themselves bohemians, having taken the term from Henri Murger's famous book. Harry Clapp, the editor of the *Saturday Press,* was the acknowledged king of this bohemia and an actress named Ada Clare its queen. Among those who were wont to gather around Pfaff's long table were Fitz-James O'Brien, an extremely gifted young Irishman who was killed in the early days of the Civil War; Artemus Ward, George Arnold, E. C. Stedman and Georges Clemenceau, whose picture in a yellow frame hung upon the wall. The bohemians affected, or perhaps felt, a contempt for the more polite and conserva-

tive world of letters and disliked Emerson because he had referred to their idol, Edgar Poe, as "the jingle-man." Nevertheless, as later years proved, there was much talent among them. I was of course too young to have a share in these revels and it was not until much later that I learned of them, but once, in the early Seventies, I descended into that cellar and saw, seated about that table, a few survivors of the old crowd, an occasion to which I shall allude in a later chapter.

Of course what I have written of this period can hardly be said to come within the scope of my personal recollections, but the newspapers of the day gave ample currency to all its extravagance and vulgarity and the immorality and thievery that went on, unrebuked in high and low places, so that even school-boys could not wholly escape their malign influence. The conditions that I have described literally ended in a single night with the panic of 1873. Years afterward a friend of mine who lived then in the Haight House, situated at the corner of Fifteenth Street and Fifth Avenue and connected with Delmonico's next door by a passageway, told me that up to the moment of the panic there was a constant succession of waiters between the two buildings, bearing costly food and wines and that that procession ceased, never to return, the day after the panic began.

CHAPTER V

THE end of my boyhood was almost coincident with that of the "Flash Age" and I was seventeen years old when I went to work. I called myself a civil engineer but I was merely a rodman on the Long Island City survey under George S. Greene, Jr., famous for his topographical work. I obtained the position through my elder brother, Arthur, and we lived in Astoria, then one of the oldest and most attractive of the city's suburbs, the home of the Barclay, Blackwell, Larocque, Polhemus and other well-known families. Despite its nearness to the metropolis, being separated only by the East River, it was so far distant through lack of means of communication that when we visited the theatre at night we were obliged to return in a rowboat. I chained my way through every field and garden in the place and also helped in the survey of Riker's, the North and South Brother, and Berrian Islands. The last-named was a bit of sand covered with coarse sea grass and situated in a desolate spot east of Astoria. There was an old barn on it and sometimes we saw a boat moored to a stake near by. Not until years afterward did I learn who owned that boat.

The kidnapping of Charlie Ross in 1876 stirred the whole nation as a crime of this sort never fails to awaken

widespread indignation. Although every effort was made to recover the boy, it was not until two or three years later that the identity of his abductors was made known. It was on the premises of Judge Van Brunt of Bay Ridge, that this fact was revealed in one of the most dramatic episodes in the criminal history of the country. Awakened one night by unusual sounds the Judge and his nephew went downstairs and surprised two thieves endeavoring to enter the house. Shots were exchanged and the two marauders fell to the ground mortally wounded. As the Judge bent over one of them the latter said, speaking with much difficulty: "It's all up with me and I may as well tell you that we are the men who stole Charlie Ross!"

"Where is the boy?" demanded the Judge eagerly.

But the other was too far gone for adequate reply and could only say: "Ask Joe; he knows." And with these words he expired. The Judge went at once to the other man but he was already dead and with him died the secret of Charlie Ross's abduction.

It was not until some time after this occurrence that I learned that these two river thieves were the ones who had used Berrian Island as their hang-out and I have always believed that the boy died and was buried on that desolate strip of sand.

While living in Astoria, I became acquainted with a family named Hatch, consisting of a father and mother and a much-loved daughter. Some years later the young lady died and the grief-stricken parents sought surcease from sorrow in Spiritualism and held Sunday séances in their home at which, they firmly believed, the spirit of

their daughter was present. It was not until the beginning of the present century that mere accident threw in my way a bit of information that connected this family with one of our greatest national tragedies. It seems that President Garfield learned of these séances through a mutual friend, became deeply interested and arranged to be present at one of them. It was for this purpose that he started for New York the day he was shot. I cannot absolutely guarantee this story as I can others in these memoirs. It came to me in two or three detached fragments, bits of circumstantial evidence which fitted in with what I already knew. From this I wove a web, not strong enough to hang a man but sufficient to sustain a story that does not reflect discredit on any of the parties concerned, especially when supplemented by this frank acknowledgment.

The "Flash Age" was succeeded by half a dozen years of sobriety, commercial and social depression and enforced economy that undoubtedly helped to bring on the great Moody and Sankey revival which forced many to their knees in the dust and ashes of a short-lived penitence. So barren were these years of melodramatic incidents of the kind that punctuate the records of the "Flash Age" that the Beecher scandal created a wave of feverish interest that spread with incredible swiftness to every part of the country. For the first time in its history Brooklyn took first place in the thoughts of the entire nation. As the long trial proceeded the excitement increased, which is all the more to be wondered at when we consider that both parties to the suit were middle-aged and that not even the frequent printing of

the portrait of Mrs. Tilton, which showed her to have been denied the fatal gift of beauty, could lessen the public hysteria. Discussions of the unsavory topic drove the dove of peace from once happy boarding-houses. Passengers on railroad trains were invited to vote guilty or innocent on ballots cast into a hat. The renown of the eminent counsel engaged on the case became nation wide and many a reporter like Julian Ralph and T. H. Hamilton lived to bless the Beecher trial for giving him his first great opportunity.

The panic of 1873 found me working as a clerk in a factory in Newark where I learned something about the relations between labor, capital and brains that not all the harangues of professional labor leaders nor the dissertations of the theorists who seem unaware of the value of the third element in the equation have ever driven out of my head.

One thing that I learned was the value of the old-fashioned guild of workmen as compared with the modern political machine made up of many trades unions. And the superior benefits of the former are shared by workers, employers and the general public. At this time the best silver-plating was done by hand, while electro-plating was used only on cheaper goods. The hand-platers, who were largely British, had their guild which fixed the prices of all piece-work. One day my employer, at that time rather new to the business, told me to go upstairs and inform the platers that he had decided to cut down these prices ten per cent. The men received the message with perfect nonchalance and acknowledged it only by taking off their aprons, putting

on their coats and lighting their pipes, while I, chuckling inwardly, returned to the office to await further proceedings.

I had not long to wait, for soon a slow-moving procession of artisans strolled past us on their way to the outer door.

"James," cried my boss excitedly, "where are those men going? Tell them to come back and finish up those orders!"

When I told him that they were going out on strike because the prices had been cut down he seemed astounded at their audacity, but recovered in time to call them back and beg them to return. This they reluctantly consented to do, and thereafter no further attempts were made to lower their wages.

This guild limited the number of its apprentices, admitting none save first-class artisans, and rigorously maintained a high standard of workmanship. It demanded and received a high rate of compensation at a time when, at least in our shop, few men earned as much as fifteen dollars a week. The benefit to the customer is obvious; that the employers realized it also is evidenced by the fact that it was hard for any hand-plater who could not show a ticket of membership to get work in any factory in Newark.

It was soon after the panic and at the very beginning of this period of dull and dreary depression that I entered the office of the *Railroad Gazette* and began to learn something about publishing. Business was in a deplorable state at this time and I remember that I solicited advertisements for several months with most discourag-

ing results. At last, however, I returned in triumph to the office with an order for a single insertion of the notice of a railroad directors' meeting, the price of which was two dollars. Desirous of improving my French I lived at a French boarding-house chiefly inhabited by Germans, but at my end of the table there were three or four Genevese Swiss and the conversation was carried on in the French tongue. It was here that I first became interested in foreigners and it was this interest that led me in later years into all sorts of queer society. I learned here the superiority of such an establishment over its American counterpart. The conversation was informative, the food excellent, and we took turns in making the salad. When my week came around I received much frank and valuable criticism and was taught to dry the lettuce leaves before putting on the oil and vinegar. A great many persons have not learned this yet.

When I entered the office of the *Gazette* the means of communication between uptown and down were lumbering stage-coaches on Broadway and street cars in other thoroughfares. The agitation for a better system had culminated in the appointment of a Rapid Transit Committee of which the editor of the *Gazette,* Mr. M. N. Forney, was a member. Thus it fell to my lot to obtain the earliest estimate of the city's daily passenger traffic, which I did by standing in a doorway at different hours of the day and guessing at the number of people who went by on foot and in cars. Many were the plans for underground as well as overhead and surface traffic that were advanced in those days. Mr. Peter Cooper had already excited general ridicule by suggesting an endless

wire cord coiled around a drum, and eleven years later the first of the cable cars was installed in New York. Another scheme that was in advance of its time was that of a certain Melville Smith, who wished to build what he called an Arcade Railway, to run in a street to be created directly under Broadway with four tracks and a system by which, during the slack hours, freight could be delivered at the basement doors of the business houses. But that and all other underground schemes were rejected because of the smoke nuisance, for electricity had not then been developed to the extent that it has now.

It was during the early Seventies that I made my first acquaintance with the then beautiful Passaic Valley. My family were spending the winter in Belleville and the first time I visited them I crossed the Newark marshes from Jersey City in a stage coach, that being about the only means of communication on a Sunday. It was a beautiful river then, lined on both sides with fine old-fashioned country houses, many of which were owned by persons of social distinction. The Van Rensselaer mansion, now one of the landmarks of Belleville, was still the home of the family of that name, and William Travers Jerome had a country place directly opposite the home of the Satterthwaite family. The Satterthwaites, on the distaff side, were friends of ours for more than one generation and it was in the kitchen of Mr. Satterthwaite's early New York home on lower Broadway that Commodore Vanderbilt had paid court to his first wife, then employed there as cook.

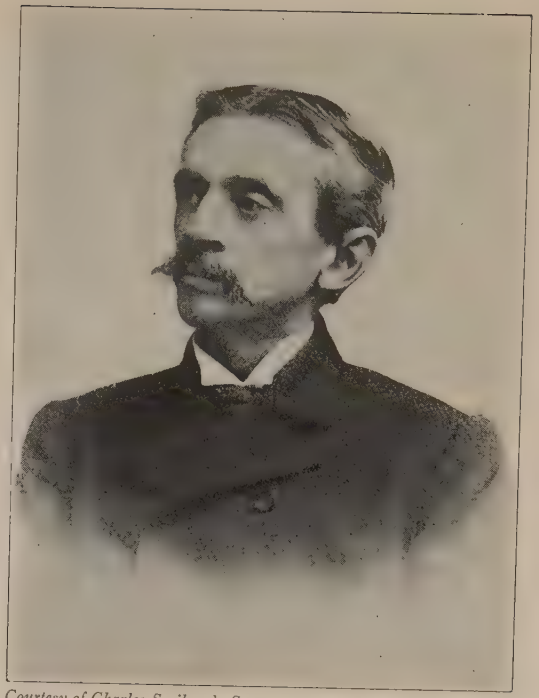
The first time I ever visited this fine old house on the banks of the Passaic, I wanted to live in it and a quarter

of a century later I did occupy it during two summers.

But by this time a sad change had come over the valley; the shad-nets that used to stand in front of the hospitable old houses—Passaic shad were famous in the old days—were gone and the river had become a sewer for the town of Paterson. I fear that its glory as a place of residence has long since departed. The Satterthwaite estate, which extended to the wooded slope above the river, had become the village of Nutley with many Queen Anne houses in which many artists and men of letters have lived at one time or another, among them Bunner, Stockton, Ripley Hitchcock, Frank Fowler, Arthur Hoeber, E. L. Field and Colonel H. G. Prout, editor of the *Railroad Gazette.*

The first of the literary acquaintances whom I afterward came to know well was Frank R. Stockton, whom I met during my term of service on the *Railroad Gazette.* The publisher of the *Gazette* was William H. Boardman, who was at that time boarding with the Stocktons in Rutherford, N. J., and who afterward figured as the boarder in Mr. Stockton's delightfully humorous *Rudder Grange.* This story had a certain foundation, in fact, and was suggested by a canal boat that lay rotting on the shore of the near-by Passaic River. Pomona, the maid-servant, was drawn from life and Boardman often told me that as he sat at work in the dining-room on summer evenings he could hear her reading half aloud her novelettes of high life exactly as she is described in the book. Mr. Stockton, who was at that time editor of *St. Nicholas,* was a slender, delicate man, slightly lame

ANDREW E. WATROUS, BRILLIANT WRITER



Courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons

FRANK R. STOCKTON, AUTHOR OF "THE RUDDER GRANGE"

and with wonderful dark eyes. He had a distinct charm of manner and was fortunate in imparting that quality to his work.

The first reportorial work that I ever undertook was for the *Railroad Gazette* when I was sent on a trip to Rondout to describe a new process for the conversion of coal-dust into fuel. I shall never forget the pride and delight that filled my soul as I stepped aboard the Hudson River steamboat. "Little do these passengers dream that I am a reporter," I said to myself as I walked proudly down the gangway. Not even the presence of a dozen real reporters could rob me of my self-importance and I greatly enjoyed the deference with which I was treated by the organizers of the expedition. Still greater was my delight when I read my account in the columns of the *Gazette* and realized that I was actually in print.

My next reportorial work was for a moribund weekly paper called *The Atlas* in which I recorded the deliberations of an organization called "The Farmers' Club" which, thanks to the kindness of Peter Cooper, had headquarters rent free in Cooper Union. This organization had enjoyed no small importance in the days when Horace Greeley was prominent in it, but there remained now but a shadow of its former greatness. I don't think there was a single real farmer in it, but there were still a few manufacturers and distillers in the town who had faith in its influence. It had the customary set of officers and these gentlemen would prowl about among these believers, suggesting the value of a visit of inspection by the club, promising that the occasion would be fittingly

celebrated in the press. Their efforts were among the manufacturers of light portable articles; they never cared to visit an iron foundry or a tombstone maker. When such a visit was arranged the farmers would swoop down upon their victim like a swarm of locusts, inspect everything with solemn mien and carry off as souvenirs of the event whatever they were allowed to lay hands on. The banner expedition in my time was to a New Jersey vineyard, whence we returned with spoils in the shape of bottles of wine and brandy that taxed the capacity of our pockets.

Thus far I had not found any sort of employment that was entirely to my taste, for I had always desired to be a real writer, to which course all my relatives were stoutly opposed, and I had even tried to obtain the post of New York correspondent for some provincial journal. It was in this fashion that young men of this period were wont to break into the profession of letters. Nearly every out-of-town newspaper printed a regular New York letter and if I had only known anything about New York or had been able to describe it properly, I might have obtained such an opportunity.

It was during this period of depression that a chance acquaintance, which soon developed into an intimacy, decided the choice of my occupation. Frederic S. Daniel was a newspaper man of a type now extinct, and it was his talk of his many experiences that gave me a rosy view of journalism and fired my imagination and ambition. His brother, John W. Daniel, of Virginia, had been our Minister to Rome in the days when it was a Papal State and my friend had served as Secretary of Legation, a

post that had given him opportunities to meet many persons of distinction and acquire a knowledge of European affairs. At the close of the Civil War, in which he had fought as a Confederate soldier, while his brother edited the *Richmond Examiner,* he returned to Italy as a newspaper correspondent with a so-called "roving commission" of a kind now unknown.

Many an evening has Daniel held me spell-bound with recital of the many events of historical importance that had passed before his eyes. At the close of the war he went out of Richmond in the same car with Jefferson Davis and his cabinet. He was in the first train that passed through the Mont Cenis Tunnel. He heard the Pope read the "Allocution of Infallibility" in the Vatican. He saw Louis Napoleon at the very height of his power and renown as he entered Turin with Victor Emmanuel at the end of the victorious Italian campaign, and he saw him leaving the field of Sedan with his train of baggage, a cigarette between his lips, his immobile face giving no sign of the bitterness he must have felt. Not many months later Daniel witnessed the crowning of the Emperor William at Versailles, and still later entered Paris with the Prussian army. His acquaintance had been very wide. In his younger days he had quaffed many a cup with good company in Pfaff's cellar; a cousin of Moncure D. Conway, he had known well the life of literary London, and while in Rome he had been on friendly terms with such statesmen as Cardinal Antonelli and Count Cavour.

One story that Daniel told me is worth repeating here. In the early summer of 1870 while Europe was ap-

parently in a state of profound peace he was living in Rome as the correspondent of the *New York Herald.* Great was his surprise one day when he received from the elder Bennett in New York, this terse cable message: "Go to Berlin and follow the army." He obeyed the command without knowing what army he was to follow or where it might lead him, and it was not until a week later that he learned through diplomatic channels of the probable rupture of relations between France and Prussia. He followed the army to the gates of Paris in company with Archibald Forbes, and when that greatest of war correspondents visited New York, Daniel took me to call on him.

Hearing all this and of the manner in which the most reckless drafts on the home office were honored, the profession of journalism loomed larger than ever in my mind and, as I now realize, had much to do with shaping my destiny. Daniel was one of the truest bohemians I have ever known for he was also a gentleman by birth and instinct, and such as he make the best of the bohemian caste as they are devoid of the social snobbery that so often poisons bohemia's cup. His discourse, therefore, made me believe that, "I would rather live in bohemia than in any other land," to quote Boyle O'Reilly. I may add that the customs prevalent in some parts of that land have disillusioned me, while the difficulties I have since encountered in getting an expense bill of $2.75 past the city editor's desk have completely dispelled the myth of reckless expenditure in newspaper management.

Two episodes that disturbed the monotony of this dull age were the Centennial Exposition and the short-lived

vogue of blue glass rays as a cure-all, both of which led to the spending of a little money—not much, of course, but enough to cause the hopeful to declare that business was reviving. Pocket books long closed, flew open at the call of the Centennial Exposition, an event that seemed to presage a still further revival of commerce, for the belief was widespread that to "keep the money in circulation" was a panacea for all financial ills.

I spent a week at the Exposition and saw there the first reigning sovereign my eyes had ever rested on in the person of that indefatigable sight-seer and searcher after knowledge, the Emperor of Brazil. Despite the years made evident by his white hairs, he rushed from one exhibit to another with his perspiring escort at his heels, examining everything and startling the exhibitors by the vigor of his inquiries. An acquaintance of mine serving on the committee appointed to entertain him paused long enough in his flight to say to me as he wiped the sweat from his brow: "I wish to God he'd go home! We're all of us pretty near dead!"

Two Parisian gourmands, whom I knew, took me to the restaurant opened by the proprietors of the famous *Trois Frères Provençaux* at a scale of prices that had already staggered the provincial and even the urban dwellers in America. We feasted luxuriously and our cheque for the meal, including a bottle of wine was about six dollars, the largest sum I had ever seen paid for a single meal.

In prying open countless pockets, flat as well as bulging, the Exposition gave to the nation something far better than the hoped-for revival of business; it stimu-

lated an interest in things above the material side of life as no public display had ever done before and as none has done since. That it attracted from every corner of the land persons of the most limited means proves that as a nation we are, or were then, eager to learn. It rendered many services in an educational way and none greater than that which created an interest in various forms of art and a new delight in its beauty. Its exhibition of paintings proved a revelation to thousands who had seen but few pictures before and had never given serious consideration to either form or color. A much larger class and one that included persons of culture and refinement learned something of the possibilities of household decoration and were quick to make practical use of what they learned. Chromos soon went into eclipse; "I'm Grandmama now" and "Fast Asleep" and "Wide Awake" vanished from cottage walls.

I think it was the Exposition that gave the death-blow to the sombre furnishings of black walnut which encumbered our drawing-rooms; it certainly served to shake our faith in the heavy sofas and chairs, stuffed to the point of apoplexy, which bore silent testimony to the enduring worth of the Victorian Age. As mosquitos carry contagion, so did visitors return from Philadelphia to all parts of the country with minds intent on adding new beauty to their homes. They had discovered to their amazement that pleasing articles of domestic use were not much more costly than ugly ones, and that tastefully decorated china and brightly colored curtains and draperies were within the reach of even a very slender purse. The enormous benefit derived from this

widespread growth of artistic taste cannot be over-estimated, and it was all the greater because it was accomplished not by legislative enactment but through the voluntary efforts of each individual housekeeper. If the nation had been commanded by Congress to beautify its homes it would have resented the order just as many who never touch liquor rebel against Prohibition.

It is not surprising that the craze for household decoration which left its indelible mark on the nation should have thrown into eclipse those articles of a simpler and elder age which are now so freely imitated and sold at high prices as "antiques"; and still less to be wondered at is the trail of meretricious over-decoration which that craze left behind it. Fine old mantelpieces were hidden under rickety sets of shelves called "over-mantels"; ribbons were tied around chairs, tables, piano legs and even coal scuttles, and such articles of textile disfigurement as "drapes" and "throws" were added to the upholsterer's stock in trade. I am afraid that this riot of bad taste is better remembered now than the direct result of the Centennial but the influence of the last named will be felt long after the other is forgotten. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 gave incontrovertible proof of what has been accomplished in the development of native art in seventeen years.

As I write a discussion is raging in regard to the chronological accuracy of Mrs. Wharton's novel, "The Age of Innocence," and I am reminded thereby of the period, so different from our own, with which it deals. We were nearer to Paris then than to London, so far as fashion went, for the Second Empire had not yet lost

its glamour and it was not unusual to see men attired in evening dress at afternoon receptions. The dinner hour was earlier then and afforded less time for a change of raiment. Although much has been said and written of the freedom enjoyed by young women of the present day, they had more freedom then in one respect than at present, for they were not as carefully chaperoned when their young admirers paid their evening calls. I well remember my surprise when I was told that afternoon calls were the custom in London and was further informed that this was intended to give better opportunity to young peers and others of wealth and leisure as the younger sons were many of them at work at that time.

The usual mode of procedure at these evening visits was about as follows: On arriving the caller would be ushered into a faintly lighted drawing-room, there to wait while his name was announced. Presently the maid would return with the remark that Miss Mamie would be down directly and then proceed to light four burners in the heavy chandelier, three of which would be promptly extinguished by the visitor. It always seemed to me that a ring at the front door served also as a dressing bell, for no young lady ever descended in less than a quarter of an hour. Her invariable formula after greeting her visitor was to "have a little more light on the subject," to which the other would object on the ground of weak eyes: Then the two would seat themselves on a slippery sofa for intimate communion. Several of these girls whom I came to know quite well might have been orphans for all I knew, for I never saw either of

their parents. There was one daughter, however, whose mother was nearly always present during these visits, a gracious charming woman whom we young fellows liked better than the other, and another member of the family was a small and extremely good looking and attractive brother whom I did not see again until twenty years later when in my journalistic capacity I called on him in Sing Sing prison. He was as handsome as ever and the striped suit that he wore had been made for him of fine material by a Fifth Avenue tailor. Principal Keeper Connaughton told me that he was serving a long term for the crime of arson and that during this time his mother had never been once to see him, an instance of maternal neglect almost unknown in the annals of the prison. This episode convinced me that it is necessary sometimes to revise early estimates of feminine character.

The reception given, or to speak more truthfully, offered to the Earl of Dunraven during the middle Seventies was an episode that aroused much comment at the time and was not, so far as I know, referred to in the press when the Earl's participation in the yacht race served as a theme for so many nimble pens. An ambitious mother whose acquaintance Lord Dunraven had made, invited him quite informally to visit her and her daughter on a certain day, to which proposition he courteously agreed, whereupon they sent out engraved cards to a numerous company bidding them "meet the Earl of Dunraven." According to my memory everybody, including myself, bidden to this ceremony arrived except the guest of honor who, learning of this unex-

pected turn of affairs, was seized with an opportune illness. I believe I am one of the few survivors of this chilly function.

I have now arrived at an experience that I had after leaving the *Gazette* which, although unpleasant at the time, proved so valuable to me that I am able to record it without evincing a particle of the bitter animosity that I once felt toward him at whose hand I suffered. In fact I shall not mention his name and I would not relate this little story were it not for the lesson that it conveys.

My new employer had at one time shown himself to be my friend and he was a man of fine literary taste and lofty ideals. But since my former intimacy with him he had married a woman of far nobler character than his own and was now supported by her or his mother-in-law or both, I never quite knew which. He was indeed an idealist, the first of his kind I ever knew and of a type all too common to-day. Of the many conversations that we had this one will serve as a sample of them all.

On the second floor of his mother-in-law's house that lady had set apart for his special use a fine study, and here we sat one evening until far into the night while he talked and I listened to what impressed me as about the finest flood of exalted sentiment that had ever reached my ears.

My friend had a weakness for strong drink, indulgence in which tended to make him a sort of family nuisance. He had not sufficient strength of character to go on a prolonged toot and great care was taken to keep temptation away from him. On this occasion I remember that

he erected on the table a little cave of books with a volume of *The History of England* as a door, and within this cave stood a flask of whiskey and a glass—only one glass, for he ran true to form. Ever and anon as he talked he would go to the door and listen and then return with furtive step, take down *The History of England,* pour himself out a drink and then close up the cave again.

"I tell you, Ford," he said in the earnest tones that always carried conviction with me until I came to know him better, "this world is entering upon a new stage in which love of humanity is going to play a stronger part than ever before. We are all comrades here and our duty is to help one another. We see men all around us getting rich by usury, taking toll of the real toiler. A man has no right to take more than six per cent upon his invested capital."

"But," said I, as he paused to replenish the single glass, "suppose that his investment should yield him ten per cent, what should he do then?"

"Give four per cent to the poor!" exclaimed the idealist as he replaced *The History of England.*

Never in my life had I listened to such noble sentiments and I was still brooding over what I had heard when he changed the conversation by inquiring if the foreman had received a certain amount of back wages that had been due him for some time. I answered that he had not, as the profits of the enterprise had not yet permitted it.

"Don't give it to him then. Perhaps he'll forget all about it. As soon as you get a little ahead, let me have

it. He'd probably spend it in drink if you were to give it to him."

To this day I never read or hear any of the outpourings of idealism without remembering the scene in the beautiful library furnished by the mother-in-law, listening once more to the beautiful line of conversation and seeing, with a vision as clear as that of yesterday, the cave of books, the flask and the single glass. Even the sight of a *History of England* is enough to recall it all, and if anyone were to call me "comrade," I would button up my pockets.

CHAPTER VI

FOR reasons better understood by persons of advanced years than by the younger generation, the ninth decade of the Nineteenth Century has of late enjoyed importance as a distinct and fruitful historical period, referred to by British as well as American writers as "the Eighties." This is specially applicable to New York, with whose annals these memoirs have to deal. At the beginning of this decade the town was rapidly recovering from the depression of previous years and renewing its activities under many new conditions. The telephone, which had been sneered at as a fraud when it was exhibited in Chickering Hall, was coming into general use, and the newly invented typewriter was opening to women a wide field of employment and sending swarms of attractive typists into the financial district where a few years previous the appearance of a pretty young girl had caused a general twisting of necks and admiring glances. The "brownstone age" had already passed, and the profession of architecture was assuming new importance as the houses hastily run up by speculators during the Civil War were replaced by better structures. Various athletic sports were receiving fresh impetus at the hands of James Gordon Bennett and other men of means and influence, and sparring matches were fast gaining in popularity.

I recall a rather sparsely attended glove contest where I found myself seated next to an elderly man whose conversation proved him a keen lover of the manly art. "Young man," he said to me in earnest tones, "there is a boxer billed to appear to-night who in my opinion is going to become the greatest fighter of his time. And when I tell you that I've been attending bare-knuckle prize fights as well as these modern glove contests all my life, and that I was one of the very few men who crossed the ocean in 1860 to see the Heenan-Sayres fight, you'll perhaps believe that I know what I'm talking about. There he comes now!" he added as a tall, well-built young man climbed upon the stage. "He's billed to fight an unknown and I want you to take a good look at his back, his loins and his arms and watch him when he spars."

The "unknown" had evidently noted these evidences of strength and fistic skill, for a moment later the master of ceremonies announced that he "h'ain't showed up yet," and I missed my first chance of seeing John L. Sullivan spar. A few months later he fought and whipped Paddy Ryan.

Bicycling was another sport that may be said to have begun with the Eighties, for it was then that the now obsolete high bicycle first came into use, the heavy wooden affair of the late Sixties and early Seventies having long since disappeared. C. K. Munroe, now a popular writer of boys' books, and at that time a reporter on *The Sun*, did more to stimulate interest in this sport than anyone of his time, and at his instance I joined the earliest of the New York clubs and the League of American Wheel-

men, both of which Munroe organized, beside enriching the language with the word "wheelman."

Theatrical affairs, which had suffered greatly from the general financial depression and also from the terror inspired by the disastrous Brooklyn Theatre fire, entered upon a new lease of life soon after the dawn of the Eighties, and my début on the Broadway turf as a writer of what I thought was dramatic criticism was happily coincident with that revival. Very rashly I had acquired an interest in a moribund Sunday paper, attracted more by its past history than by its future prospects. Edgar Poe had written for it, Augustin Daly had been its office boy, and many a famous name figured among its list of dead and gone contributors. Had my foresight been equal to my hindsight I would have realized that the Sunday editions of the dailies were bound to crowd out the old-fashioned weeklies, and that was what eventually happened. But although the investment proved a losing one it yielded me a practical experience in journalism—one that taught me how many things should not be done. It also gave me abundant opportunity for the study of the stage and an acquaintance with players, privileges prized by callow youth and not always despised by senile age.

At that time the playhouses were scattered along Broadway below Fourteenth Street, and the Academy of Music was, on opera nights, the centre of metropolitan fashion, as it had been since Mario and Grisi sang there in the Fifties.

I came upon the turf at a most opportune moment—the fall of 1879, to be exact—for the new decade was

destined to prove one of great theatrical interest. The American dramatist, previously a negligible quantity in the theatre, was just coming into view; management was passing from the *avant-scène* to the box-office; the speculator in famous foreign attractions was showing himself on the near horizon and the first waves of a great flood of light opera were beating on our shores. The public was ready to welcome these new conditions. Shakespeare went into temporary eclipse, and the old English comedies that had kept Wallack's Theatre in the front rank so many years were losing their hold and Drury Lane melodrama was coming to take their place on a stage dedicated to the service of England's and Ireland's best dramatic literature.

The passing of the Wallack Stock Company with its many traditions was deeply regretted by veteran players and conservative play-goers—both of which elements may be relied on to deplore any change that confirms their opinion that the stage is "going to the dogs." Nevertheless it was a harbinger of new and better conditions for the native drama, for Wallack had been bound in a life-long servitude to everything British. His principal actors were of London reputation and his plays were all of British or Irish authorship, from Goldsmith and Sheridan to Tom Robertson and Boucicault. His only experience with an American dramatist that I can recall was when he produced *Twins* by Nym Crinkle and it should be remembered that the author was a critic of whom he stood in wholesome awe. He read the manuscript of *Shenandoah* and offered to produce

it if Bronson Howard would change its locale to the Crimea.

Not until Steele Mackaye entered the field of management did capital begin to take heart. Steele Mackaye, to whom the town owed the erection of the Madison Square Theatre on the site of the house once occupied by Augustin Daly, was an actor, a playwright and above all a promoter of great ability. The opening of that theatre did much to turn the tide of depression. At a time when capital regarded all theatrical investment with suspicion, if not actual aversion, Mackaye conceived a brilliant scheme and hastened to put it into execution. He smote the dry rock of religious journalism and a stream of revenue gushed forth. At that time the Mallory brothers were peacefully conducting their paper, *The Churchman,* and to them appeared Mackaye, who was of imposing appearance and possessed of a sonorous voice which he could use in a most convincing manner both on and off the stage. He proceeded to lay pipes for the proposition he had in mind by remarking that in his opinion the drinking habit was greatly fostered by the theatre, which allowed time between the acts for patrons to seek the nearest bar-room. To this the Mallorys of course assented, as became the proprietors of a religious paper. Then Mackaye went on to say that he had perfected a device which would effectually prevent all drinking between the acts and proceeded to describe his double stage, a sort of dumb waiter which could be raised or lowered at will so that one scene could be set while that above or below it was

in use. By this means the interval between the acts could be reduced if necessary to less than a minute and would unquestionably attract a large number of persons by reason of curiosity.

Greatly impressed by the novelty and value of this invention the Mallorys, after due deliberation, agreed to build the theatre and install Mr. Mackaye as its manager. It opened with his own *Hazel Kirke,* an adaptation of an English drama called *The Green Lanes of England,* and it had a tremendously long run. *Hazel Kirke* was an ideal matinee attraction, furnishing to every woman who came equipped with three handkerchiefs and a box of caramels, a splendid afternoon's cry. The Mallorys then went into more extensive theatrical operations. Mackaye was succeeded by William Gillette, and the Frohmans were added to his staff, Dan Frohman as the business manager and his brothers in other capacities.

The productions of the Mallorys were of a gentle nature and marked by invariable good taste. They brought David Belasco from San Francisco to manage their stage and produced his play *May Blossom.* Bronson Howard, H. C. De Mille, who later collaborated with Belasco, Mrs. Hodgson Burnett and H. H. Boyesen were among the playwrights whom they favored.

It was in this theatre that Effie Ellsler, who is still playing, first made herself known to New York audiences through her performance in the title rôle in *Hazel Kirke,* and it was here, too, that Annie Russell gained her earliest renown as the heroine of *Esmeralda.* Other members of the Madison Square Company were Henry Miller, Viola Allen and Jeffreys Lewis. Rose Coghlan

was engaged for a contemplated revival of *Masks and Faces* which was abandoned because of the long run of *Hazel Kirke.*

One of the first actors signed by Mackaye, who had a great respect for cherished theatrical superstitions and tradition, was Welsh Edwards, who enjoyed a high reputation in the profession as a mascot, meaning a person who could bring good luck to any enterprise with which he was connected. He had served in that capacity in the Harrigan and Hart Company, and for a long while he drew a salary from the Mallorys without ever appearing on their stage. When Frank B. Murtha induced Lester Wallack to appear for a week at his Windsor Theatre on the Bowery, he made haste to secure Welsh Edwards and it is recorded that when Wallack first encountered him at rehearsal and noted his artistic methods he exclaimed: "Good Gawd, is that an actor?"

"No," replied Murtha. "He's something better than an actor. He's a mascot and I wouldn't risk bringing you down here to the Bowery unless I had him on my salary list."

Blood ran thicker than business in the veins of the theatrical profession in those days and many of the traveling companies were family affairs. Edwin Booth was at one time under the management of his father-in-law, McVicker, with the latter's son, my former schoolmate, as business manager and Horace's wife, Affie Weaver, as leading lady. Mr. Booth's brother, Junius Brutus Booth, and the latter's wife, Agnes Booth, one of the very best actresses who has ever graced our stage, were also members of the supporting company.

Mary Anderson played under the management of her step-father, Dr. Griffin, and Fay Templeton, who later became a favorite New York entertainer, roamed the country under her father's management, playing second to her mother, the star. Among my earliest professional friends were Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Doud Byron, who played *Across the Continent* aided by two or three of their relations. I remember now with what pleasure I saw them act—there were some who considered Mrs. Byron superior to her sister, Ada Rehan—and with what greater pleasure I visited them in their Long Branch home. Perhaps my frequent appearances before their door became tiresome to them but they left agreeable memories with me and that is something that always counts with players in their capacity as hosts.

The profession was nearer and dearer to the popular heart then than it is now, partly because the illusion of the footlights was more carefully retained, but chiefly because the personality of the players entered so largely into the matter. Once established as a favorite, an actor could use the same play an indefinite number of years. Maggie Mitchell in *Fanchon,* Joseph Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle,* and Robson and Crane in *The Henrietta,* could always command audiences. Lotta, aptly characterized by John Brougham as "the dramatic cocktail," could appear in almost anything provided she sang "The Sweet Bye and Bye," a simple ballad that never failed to reach the hearts of her audience.

The three great stock companies of New York were Wallack's, the Union Square and Daly's, which last-named opened in 1879, in the playhouse that then took

his name. Wallack's was devoted to the British drama and the Union Square to that of France, under the direction of A. M. Palmer, who had come from the Mercantile Library and knew much of the literary side of the stage but had never been much of a theatre-goer. Chance threw in his way an Austrian named A. R. Cazauran, who had been the dramatic critic of the *Brooklyn Eagle* and had an extraordinary *flair* for the drama. It was he who made the adaptations from the French and staged them. *The Two Orphans, A Celebrated Case,* and *Forbidden Fruit* were among his productions. But Mr. Palmer rendered a still greater service to the American stage by giving two plays which may be said to have inaugurated the modern American drama. One of these was *My Partner* by Bartley Campbell, and the other was *The Banker's Daughter* by Bronson Howard. The last-named had been produced in other cities and in different forms but it was not until Cazauran employed his adroit hand in its reconstruction that it became a remarkable success and paved the way for Mr. Howard's subsequent career as the leading American dramatist of his day.

Up to this time the American dramatist had not been regarded seriously. His chief occupation was in writing vehicles calculated to display the tricks or talents of some ambitious player by artfully concealing that player's poverty of resource. He followed the managers with importunities on his lips, even as the managers follow him to-day, and the two dramas that I have named literally set him on his feet.

The history of *The Two Orphans* has an amazing sound when we consider the eagerness with which

Parisian successes are watched by American managers and their agents, to say nothing of our minor dramatists. The rights for this play were acquired by Hart Jackson, an American manager, when it was first given in Paris, and the manuscript remained in his desk for some months, despite its enormous Parisian success. Finally Mr. Palmer secured it by payment of the sum originally advanced, and when it was put in rehearsal all the actors in the company were sorry for Kate Claxton, because she had the smallest of all the parts, for then, as now, players were prone to estimate parts by weight or length rather than by what they offered in the way of dramatic opportunities. Yet the blind orphan became *the* part of the piece and Miss Claxton starred in it for many seasons.

First nights were occasions that I greatly enjoyed and I may add that that is one of the few pleasures that remain with me to the present day, for my interest in new productions is almost as keen as ever. Managers were hospitable then; every office contained its sideboard, whose contents were at the service of critics while writing their notices, and on first nights there was not infrequently a cold supper with many bottles of champagne. It is many a long year since I have seen anything of the like in a New York playhouse.

When Augustin Daly opened his theatre in 1879 he had had much experience, both in management and in play-writing. Beginning his career as dramatic critic on a weekly paper he had adapted *Leah the Forsaken* for Miss Kate Bateman and written *Under the Gaslight*, a local melodrama which I witnessed as a boy with thrills running up and down my spine. He entered upon his

new venture with three young women on whose talents he set a high value. These were Miss Ada Rehan, Miss Catharine Lewis and Miss Helen Blythe, and I have heard it said that he regarded the last-named as the most promising of the trio. Miss Blythe and Miss Lewis quarreled with their manager, but Miss Rehan remained with him and accepted his teachings with results that long since spoke for themselves. Catharine Lewis became the star of the musical productions that Mr. Daly then favored and was a singularly attractive and vivacious artist. The last time I saw her was in the Town Hall at Sag Harbor, Long Island, impersonating with but little of her old fire a rôle that Mr. Daly had taught her. John Hare once told me that Miss Rehan was one of the five great actresses of the world, the others being Bernhardt, Duse, Ellen Terry and Rejane. Mr. Daly's dramatic company was not then the organization that it became in later years. Mrs. Gilbert and James Lewis and John Drew were playing elsewhere, the two first-named at the Park Theatre, where Henry E. Abbey was trying to establish a stock company. It was at the Park that I saw Agnes Booth in her incomparable performance of Gilbert's *Engaged*, and it was here also that that admirable actor, W. J. Ferguson, whom it always delights me to see, gained his first public recognition as the tramp in Bartley Campbell's *Fairfax*.

Mr. Daly had managed other theatres in New York before he established himself in what was once Wood's Museum and had developed several fine players, among them Clara Morris, Agnes Ethel and Fanny Davenport. As the French and the British drama had already been

exploited in other playhouses he now turned his attention to the German stage from which he drew many comic operas and a number of comedies which he adapted with much skill to American life. *The Royal Middy, Olivette,* and other light musical pieces, proved very successful and then he began to build up his dramatic stock company, adding to it Mrs. Gilbert, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Leclerc and John Drew, thus forming what was probably the best comedy stock company that New York has ever seen. His aim was to present on his stage well-bred society in such a manner that it could not be mistaken for anything else and to aid this illusion he engaged a number of young girls of good birth and breeding to appear in minor parts, hoping also to find among them some of the stuff of which players are made. In later years one of these young women published *The Diary of a Daly Débutante,* in which her experiences under Mr. Daly's management are delightfully portrayed.

Ada Rehan, who had already appeared in New York in a version of *L'Assomoir,* was the leading lady, and Mr. Daly devoted his best talents and energies to making her the great artist that she eventually became. He did much also for Mr. Drew and the team work of these two players was delightful to watch. Mr. Drew is in my opinion the best light comedian on our stage and he owes much to the training that he received at Mr. Daly's hands. Old time play-goers have most agreeable memories of *The Passing Regiment, Seven-twenty-eight, The Railroad of Love,* and other light comedies as well

Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, the Best Loved Member of Augustin Daly's Company, and an Actress of Rare Ability

Katherine Grey, an Accomplished Actre—

as of the Shakesperian plays that were given in later years.

Mr. Daly caught the rising tide of comic opera with much success. It was a period singularly rich in musical attractions and beside those that I have mentioned the public was treated by other managers to the works of half a score of composers, chiefly Teutonic, of great merit. One of the most popular of these operas was *The Mascot,* which had a long run at the Bijou, with Harry Brown as Prince Lorenzo and Lillie West, now the Amy Leslie of the *Chicago Daily News,* as Fiammetta. Gilbert and Sullivan had been made known to us through *Pinafore,* and I well remember attending the dress rehearsal and then the first night of *Patience.* The rehearsal was witnessed by an audience made up entirely of such invited guests as managers, players, singers, critics and other supposed experts and yet the first act went without a laugh and at the close of the performance opinion was divided as to the prospects of the piece. But nothing shook the faith of its manager, William Henderson, the father of W. J. Henderson, the musical critic, and his optimism was fully justified the following evening when the same performance was given before an enthusiastic audience that had paid for their seats.

CHAPTER VII

IN my younger days the minstrels furnished us with most of our jokes and songs, the latter being largely of a sentimental or melancholy nature. The San Francisco Minstrels was the leading home of this kind of entertainment and Messrs. Birch, Wambold, Backus and Bernard were its chief exponents. The Civil War gave minstrelsy its death-blow but it staggered on for many years after and was kept alive for a short time by fancy clothes and other innovations. Haverly organized a company with the motto, "40, count 'em, 40," and took this huge organization to London. My cousin, Sim Ford, witnessed the entertainment there and thus commented on the density of the audience. "A good joke was received almost with falling tears and then in bitter despair the end man began to sing, 'Kiss me o'er my mother's grave,' in the midst of which roars of laughter greeted him. The audience had just caught on to the point of the joke."

The town will always support one humorous entertainment that is somewhat different from the regular theatrical amusements and Harrigan and Hart took the place of minstrelsy during the latter's failing years. It was late in the Seventies that this famous team, having finished their apprenticeship in variety, entered upon their notable career in the *Théâtre Comique* directly opposite

the St. Nicholas Hotel. They had not then received any critical consideration, nor gained much public recognition outside of the lower wards. Their work fascinated me from the first and I sought their acquaintance and spent more than one evening in the room in which the two partners dressed, thus gaining material for what I believe were the first newspaper articles of any length ever printed about them.

Their entertainment is still an unforgettable memory in the minds of all old-time New Yorkers. Their sketches were humorous pictures of those phases of local life that they all understood so well and their company was made up for the most part of variety teams, such as Wild and Gray, Goss and Fox and Tiernan and Cronin, together with entertainers like Annie Yeamans, Annie Mack and Harry Fisher, all of whom became thoroughly identified in the popular mind with the rôles that they assumed. Nearly all of these performers are dead; but a few years ago I passed a very pleasant hour with Mrs. Ed. Merritt (Annie Mack of other times) in her comfortable home far uptown, talking over the days long gone by. Harrigan was the dramatist and stage manager of the company but Tony Hart was the actor and a more versatile and charming one I have seldom seen in all my years of play-going. Among his parts that I recall were Mrs. Allup, a colored woman; Tommy Mulligan, the son of the Irish tenement-house owner; a rosy, white-capped old Irishwoman in *Squatter Sovercignty,* and a pathetic foolish boy in a play of Ireland called *The Blackbird.* All their plays were marvels in the way of local detail and rich in homely wit.

I remember one scene in which the members of the Board of Aldermen visited Dan Mulligan's house and were so well entertained that they all fell asleep in the dining-room.

"Whatever will I do?" demanded Mrs. Mulligan of her husband. "The aldermen are all sound asleep. Will I wake them?"

"Lave thim be," said Mulligan. "While they sleep the city's safe."

Of late years there has arisen a school of stage decoration which utterly ignores illusion and is therefore highly praised by those verbose persons who known nothing about the theatre. A long white screen with a vase painted on one end of it and the figure of a goat on the other seems to the disciples of this school to afford an admirable background for Hamlet's soliloquy. When I hear efforts of this sort extolled in support of the theory that the action of the play and the scenery may be divorced to advantage, I think of the magnificent scenery with which Edwin Booth fitted out his own theatre in the late Sixties; and I recall also, the less pretentious but equally effective methods by which Ed. Harrigan and Robert Cutler supplemented theatric illusion. One scene in *The Mulligan Guard Picnic* still lives in my memory. It was, to use a theatrical term, "played in one," that is to say in a very narrow space at the very front of the tiny stage set to represent a dock to which was moored the steamboat on which the revelers were about to depart on their picnic. The members of the company filed by the ticket-taker in rapid succession and all went on board, with the exception of Johnny Wild

who was turned back for the want of a ticket. It was in this play that he appeared without his usual burnt cork makeup, as "Lemons the Bum," and he was never seen in better form. The company, having embarked, the hawser was cast off and the boat, or all that could be seen of it, began to move and then Wild came tearing down the dock and leaped aboard. What made this scene effective was the skill with which so much was left to the imagination. Although only the gunwale of the boat and the hawser attached to a post on the dock were visible, one felt that a real steamboat was there; nor did this illusion vanish when it began to move off into midstream.

Harrigan's last highly successful production was *Reilly and the Four Hundred,* given in 1890, at the theatre which then bore his name and is now known as the Garrick. This play served to introduce to the public a character entirely new to our stage called *The Tough Girl,* played by Miss Ada Lewis, who literally awoke the next morning to find herself famous. Miss Lewis was then very young and very pretty but very early in the game she realized that beauty quickly fades and she determined to devote herself to character parts, in which line of endeavor she has been extremely successful and, although not a star, ranks high in popular favor.

"Keep the money in the family," was the motto that might well have been displayed in the lobby of the Comique, and this, combined with the clannish Irish sense, served to put relatives of both partners on the payroll. Dave Braham, the composer, was Harrigan's father-

in-law; Hart's brother, Johnny Cannon, was manager, and Harrigan's father had charge of the box-office. The elder Harrigan was a taciturn Celt of dour mien whose native humor found expression in the apt phrases with which he replied to questions that he deemed superfluous.

"Have you got any seats?"

"Yes, we've got nine hundred of them."

"Are they good seats?"

"They're covered with raw silk."

"Can I get two for to-night?"

"If you've got the price."

"Are these the seats for to-night?"

"No, those are the tickets. The seats are inside."

"Will they be there when I come?"

"Well, they're screwed to the floor."

After Harrigan and Hart, Charlie Hoyt's farces entered upon their long and prosperous run. Hoyt had edited the comic column of the *Boston Post* and conceived the idea of dramatizing the various characters with whom comic journalism had made the public familiar. Among these were the plumber, the mother-in-law, the grass-widow, and the temperance crank. Possessed of a rich fund of native humor he knew its value and never wasted it in desultory effort. He never took up his pen without having a butt for his wit plainly in view. In one play it was the plumber, in another the strong-minded woman, in another the bucolic Congressman, and in another the grass-widow.

Hoyt was a superstitious man who believed in following his lucky star. The title of his first play began with the article A, and he followed this form of nomenclature

in every succeeding piece. He tried out his first production in a small New England town and that town became the scene of the initial performance of every one of his subsequent successes. His first wife, Flora Walsh, was an actress of no mean type and his second, Caroline Miskel, was a rarely beautiful woman.

It was one of Hoyt's songs that wrought a remarkable change in New York's topography by transferring from the Bowery such valuable industries as the administering of knock-out drops, bunco-steering, dealings in counterfeit money and gold bricks, and mock auctions to the neighborhood of Broadway and Forty-second Street where wire-tapping had already established itself as a learned profession. It happened not infrequently that when a member of this craft darted out of the Metropole Hotel pursued by a person of bucolic aspect, the loiterers on the pavement would instinctively make way for the wire-tapper and trip up his pursuer, thus showing where their hearts were.

Broadway legendry of recent years says that a passenger on a rubber-neck coach exclaimed as his eye fell on a group in front of the Metropole, "There's the man who stole my watch and money!" Whereat everybody ran.

It was early in the Eighties that bunco-steering, long practiced in primitive fashion on the Bowery, gained sudden notoriety in the neighborhood of Madison Square as a learned profession. One sunny afternoon the ever-alert eye of "Hungry Joe," expert in the gentle art of angling for suckers in urban waters, brightened perceptibly as it fell upon Oscar Wilde, seated on a bench in the Square, his mind busy with the making of epigrams

and estimates of the profits of his forthcoming tour. Now "Hungry Joe" was a man of some literary taste and a buyer of good books, so it was easy for him to lure Wilde into a discussion of the poet's work, after the familiar gambit of having met him in the home of Mr. Drexel in Philadelphia. Nor did Wilde lose interest in the talk when his new acquaintance mentioned a novel game of chance in which he found much diversion and more profit in the brief intervals of leisure afforded by his arduous literary pursuits.

An hour later the Irish bard dashed through the door of a near-by gambling house in which cards were dealt from a "brace box" and tore down Twenty-third Street to his bank in the vain hope of stopping payment on a cheque that did not represent all his losings.

The victimizing of the venerable Charles Francis Adams in Boston by one Fitzgerald has not been forgotten, but as an aftermath of that occurrence and in evidence of the fact that caste is recognized in the criminal as well as in other worlds, I will relate the following: A friend whose wide acquaintance among evil-doers has always been a source of envy to me, though I have done fairly well myself considering my early disadvantages, was walking one day with Mr. William Porter, a bank burglar of high degree, and happened to meet Mr. Fitzgerald, who paused for a moment's talk. Porter ignored him and walked on, and when his companion rejoined him he addressed him in these words:

"I don't see how you can bring yourself to stand there talking with an infernal scoundrel who sneaked himself into the confidence of an aged man of distinction in

HARRY KERNELL, FAMOUS FOR "SIDEWALK CONVERSATION" WITH HIS BROTHER JOHN

KITTY O'NEIL, A PRETTY AND VERY POPULAR JIG DANCER

order to rob him. When I do business I take my life and my liberty in my hands and depend on my nerve and skill to carry me through, and I never have anything to do with sneaks."

The confidence game has gone higher in the scale by which men and methods are judged and is not infrequently employed by corporations doing business under municipal charter. The old practitioners of the craft have disappeared from the scenes of their former exploits. Death long ago claimed Peter Lake, known as "Grand Central Pete," and Ike Vail. The last I heard of "Hungry Joe" he was engaged in the laundry business, and his compeer, "Kid" Miller, after years of retirement in Philadelphia, had sought oblivion in the shadows of Paterson, N. J. Either one of those men was sufficiently quick witted to have been the hero of a story current a few years ago.

"You don't remember me?" exclaimed a slick looking individual as he grasped a stranger by the hand: "I'm Hiram Perkins' son and I met you in his bank in Schoharie."

"Hold on," rejoined the other, over whose face had crept a look of bucolic cunning; "I never saw you in Schoharie and I've lived there all my life. What's more, Hiram Perkins was never married."

"I know it," replied the stranger promptly: "I'm his illegitimate son and that's the reason I simply can't bear to go back to the dear old home town where everybody knows about it."

During the early Seventies many cheap playhouses, some of which were little better than dives, were con-

ducted in New York, and perhaps the humblest of all the respectable ones was the Grand Duke's Opera House, situated in a Baxter Street cellar and named in honor of the Grand Duke Alexis then a visitor to this country. It was conducted by street boys who also composed the acting company, admission was six cents, tallow candles served as footlights and wash-tubs as private boxes. It is doubtful if any of the serious critics of that day ever gave it any consideration whatever or attended any of its performances; nevertheless it was from the Grand Duke's that there sprang one of the very best entertainments that New York has ever known.

A star attraction at this playhouse was a young comedian of unusual, though undeveloped powers. So well did he and his associates draw that a boy named Joseph Tooker, the son of a well known manager of that name, opened a rival theatre on his father's premises and looked about him for a new comedian. Hearing that a boy on the East Side was displaying much adolescent talent, he sought him out and found him tending a street soda-fountain. The lad agreed to join his company provided his friend and partner were also engaged and the two soon became favorites in the new place of amusement. The soda-fountain boy was Joe Weber, his side-partner was Lew Fields, and the star of the Grand Duke's was Sam Bernard. Many years later the three were associated together in a Broadway playhouse that lives in theatrical history.

I doubt if even those who laughed the longest and the loudest at the Weber-Fieldian drolleries ever fully realized the artistic merit of this entertainment. Fields

was, and is to this day, one of the best low comedians on our stage and his partner, a "feeder" of equal distinction.

Years ago when the two were struggling upward on the cheaper variety circuits, they received their first recognition from a really high source. One night as they were dressing at the close of their act, they were astounded by receiving the card of Mr. Joseph Jefferson and a moment later that distinguished actor had taken them both by the hand, saying: "I just called to tell you boys how much I like your work," and then, after heartily complimenting Fields, he added, "Mr. Weber, you are one of the best listeners I've seen in a long time. Keep it up, my boy, and it will be the making of you." His prophecy came true because Weber was an element of great strength, though not always appreciated by laymen, in bringing out the work of his associates.

Another reason for the success of Weber and Fields was the fact that, unlike many players whom I could name, they were never jealous of the other entertainers in their company and allowed them to give full scope to their talents. Little by little they increased the strength of their organization. Edgar Smith was their librettist and they could not have had a better one for he was a man of real wit, and when they were at their best, their company included, beside that excellent comedian Sam Bernard, Lillian Russell, Peter F. Dailey, Willie Collier, David Warfield, De Wolf Hopper, Fay Templeton, John T. Kelly, Charles J. Ross, Mabel Fenton and such dancers as the Angeles Sisters, daughters of Alexander Zanbetta, of the Ravel family, and Bonnie Maginn. Where is to be found such a constellation to-day?

Dailey was an entertainer rather than an actor and to my mind one of the funniest of men, quick at repartee and what is called a good "producer," meaning one who can interpolate a witty line at a moment's notice; but, unlike many persons of quick wit, he never said anything calculated to belittle an associate. He was seen at his best on first nights, when, at the final fall of the curtain, the ushers began to stagger down the aisles with the flowers that had been stacked up in the lobby. Dailey would receive these flowers and distribute them with characteristic comments. On one occasion when Miss Templeton had scored such a hit that the house had scarcely ceased to echo the applause, Pete glanced at the card accompanying a great sheaf of American Beauties and then said aloud, "Miss Fay Templeton," and, turning with a puzzled expression on his face to the chorus, he inquired benignly: "Which of these ladies is Miss Templeton?"

On receiving a bunch of flowers for Miss Frankie Bailey, he quickly ran his eye over the legs of the chorus until he reached hers and thus recognizing her, handed over the flowers.

Mr. Collier was another valued member of the company and an actor whose methods may be studied to advantage. In his hands farcical acting is not merely uncouth clowning, but a fine art. It was while playing at Weber and Field's that Belasco saw that Warfield, then confining himself to Jewish impersonations, possessed emotional possibilities of the highest sort, something that Warfield himself had never suspected, and he signed with him to star in *The Auctioneer*. I happened

to be present at the rehearsal when Belasco wrote into the star's part a pathetic line which the latter at first refused to read, saying, "I can make them laugh but I can't make them cry." Years afterward Wilton Lackaye asked Warfield to give one of his old Jewish impersonations at a Lambs' Gambol. "I don't want to do that old stuff again," said the other. "I used to make them laugh; now I make them cry."

"Make them cry!" exclaimed Lackaye. "Any onion can do that, but you show me a vegetable that can make them laugh!"

As Harrigan and Hart had given expression to the racial comedy of the lower wards, so did Weber and Fields portray that of upper Broadway with which their audiences, and especially those who assembled on first nights, were thoroughly familiar.

The variety stage which gave New York this famous company and in later years many of our best players, was then dominated by Tony Pastor, whose efforts to improve our theatre have not to this day received the recognition that is their due. Of gypsy blood and of a family well known in the circus ring—he had himself been a clown in his early days—he engaged in management on the Bowery in the late Sixties at a time when the variety theatre was little better than a dive and was not patronized by the more respectable classes. In order to place it on a higher plane he provided entertainment that could not offend decent taste and offered prizes of half-barrels of flour, half-tons of coal and dress patterns to induce respectable housewives to visit his theatre on Saturday nights. It was said of him that he was the

only manager in New York who would not allow a profane word to be said on his stage. His theatre proved an admirable school for the training of actors, for the different "turns" were of short duration and the players were compelled to make every moment count. In this way the art of "feeding" was developed and a good "feeder," that is to say one who gave force to another's work by paying close attention, became a highly prized performer. Those who have watched the rise of players from their humble beginnings in variety to the high places of the profession will understand that I am quite serious when I say that the most important moment in the history of the development of the theatre in this country was that in which Tony Pastor first gave away his coal, flour and dress patterns to secure the patronage of respectable women.

To this day I recall with unfeigned delight the various players who found free expression for their talents in the short "turns" which made up a variety programme, and I have seen many of those players graduate into legitimate and take high places there. I remember one after-piece at Tony Pastor's in which Lillian Russell, Nat Goodwin, May and Flo Irwin and Jacques Kruger appeared.

John W. Kelly, an unforgettable monologist, to whom his associates paid the supreme tribute due to one who "wrote his own stuff," still has a warm place in my heart. Kelly called himself the "Rolling-Mill Man" and dressed after the fashion of a prosperous mechanic in Sunday attire. He wore spectacles without glasses and had a way of looking over the tops of them that

Miss Fay Templeton, A Favorite Member of the Weber and Fields Company

Mr. Tony Pastor, Most Famous of Variety Managers

gave to his visage an expression of owlish wisdom. His entrance was always the signal for uproarious applause, which he acknowledged with, "Thank God the house is full of good Irish people to-night. You never hear a German roar like that except he's losing money." His humor was quaint and original and not unlike that of Peter Dunne, and his construction of a brief funny story a triumph of Sardou-like skill.

Another artist—and I use the term advisedly—was Vesta Tilley, the male impersonator, who was even superior to Ella Wesner of an earlier period. In one respect Miss Tilley ranked far ahead of her fellow players, for her enunciation of the English tongue, her clear articulation of each syllable and the exquisite musical quality of her voice left an indelible impress on the cultivated ear and were not lost upon the rest of the audience. Her singing of "Algy" still lingers in my memory. A few years ago Miss Tilley's husband was knighted and I believe she is now the only music hall artist in England who bears the title of Lady, a distinction well deserved.

I have never witnessed on any stage a sketch that was richer in spontaneous fun than *The Rival Car-Conductors* as interpreted by Johnny Wild and Billy Gray. It was one continuous laugh from beginning to end and its finale was a veritable triumph.

Scores of these old-time entertainers come back to me as I write. Harry and John Kernell in their sidewalk conversation; Kitty O'Neill, the nimble and graceful jig-dancer; and the Russell Brothers, the originators of "Maggie, did you give the goldfish fresh water?" "No,

they ain't drank up all I give them yesterday." And then there was Tony Pastor himself, who was allowed to sing because of the high esteem in which he was held by his patrons. His *chef d'oeuvre* was *The Girl in the Calico Dress,* which had a strong homely appeal.

What is called farce-comedy, probably because it is neither farce nor comedy, made its first appearance on our stage in a play called, *The Tourists in the Pullman Palace Car,* which was made up largely of old variety gags, and these seemed so fresh to audiences who had been brought up to scorn variety that the piece was immediately successful and was followed by scores of similar ones. But we young fellows who had been reared on minstrelsy and variety looked on these entertainments with infinite contempt.

CHAPTER VIII

AT the time of which I am now writing the masked balls given at the Academy of Music were a distinct feature of gay metropolitan life, while that of the *Cercle de l'Harmonie* was really a gorgeous affair of its kind and largely attended by the *jeunesse dorée,* the leading members of the *demi-monde* and a goodly number of actors and actresses. This annual affair lost prestige in later years when there was more Yiddish than French spoken by its frequenters.

There was always a fine supper for members of the press and a few persons of importance, like Police Commissioners, and one evening I found myself seated at a table next to a man of about my own age, of distinctly clerical appearance and a certain precise manner that seemed to set him apart from the other revellers. This was H. C. Bunner, then editor of *Puck,* and the acquaintance begun that night developed into an intimacy that lasted until the day of his death and proved of incalculable value to me professionally. Through Bunner I came to know Mr. Brander Matthews, who then lived in the same apartment house with Bunner, at the northeastern corner of Seventeenth Street and Stuyvesant Square. Richard Grant White, and later Mr. W. D. Howells lived in the same house, and another tenant was the daughter of Charles Astor Bristed, the author of the

earliest novel of New York society, "The Upper Ten Thousand." The Matthews' apartment had an unusually large drawing-room to which we young fellows were made welcome on Sunday evenings.

Well do I remember those Sunday evenings and the company that graced them. Mrs. Matthews had been an English actress of no small note and numbered many professional men and women among her friends. Her husband was the son of a man who then ranked as one of the richest of New Yorkers, holding title to more city real estate than anyone save the Astors. Brander had from his earliest years devoted himself to literature and the stage and his associates were largely drawn from those two professions. The usual New York *salon* is a cage for the exhibition of celebrities when caught, and the hostess generally contrives to turn her prey to profitable account as bait for the fashionable society to which she aspires. The Matthews' guests were first of all their friends and we young fellows who were neither fashionable nor celebrated were welcomed as if we had been both.

It was here that I made many acquaintances and not a few friends. Among them I recall Miss Sara Jewett, then leading lady of the Union Square Company; William Dean Howells, Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, Mrs. Agnes Booth, Thomas Whiffen, Mr. and Mrs. John Drew, M. Coquelin, Miss Agnes Ethel, Miss May Fielding and Mr. and Mrs. James Lewis. As the gatherings were purely professional these artists were not averse to contributing of their talents and I still remember Agnes Booth's splendid reading of *John Burns of Gettysburg.*

H. C. Bunner, Poet and Editor of *Puck*

Paul du Chaillu, African Explorer and Author of Note

Another drawing-room that was thrown open to us was that of Laurence Hutton, whose house on West Thirty-fourth Street still stands. Hutton was an amateur in friends; he collected them as other men collect china or postage stamps and as he himself was a good friend he acquired a remarkable assortment. I helped to arrange the dinner we gave on the occasion of his marriage and although no effort was made to secure the attendance of celebrities because they were celebrities, the company included Edwin Booth, John Fiske, Mark Twain, Bunner and others whose names I do not recall. There were not wanting those who called Hutton a literary and artistic snob, because of his fondness for distinguished company, but, like Matthews, he was just as friendly and hospitable to many of us who had no reputation as he was to his more famous guests. I recall many Sunday evenings in his drawing-room and dining-room with very great pleasure.

Through Bunner, I became acquainted with the *Puck* staff and it was to that periodical that I contributed some of the earliest of my humorous sketches. *Puck,* which had originally failed in St. Louis, had been started in New York in German, and the English edition was then struggling for existence. Many a time did Schwartzmann declare that they would get out no more English *Puck,* and it was only because of Bunner's remonstrances that it was continued. It was not long after my first connection with it, that it became the great and influential organ which is still remembered. Frederick B. Opper, James A. Wales and Keppler were its chief artists while Bunner, B. B. Vallentine and R. K. Mun-

kittrick formed its literary staff. Bunner wrote the editorials which attracted the attention of serious minds all over the country and he was then beginning to write the poems and short stories that were destined to give him an honored place in American literature. Munkittrick—put the accent on the penultimate syllable—was of Irish blood and a most amusing character. His humor was of a school now deemed old-fashioned; it was called "acrobatic" then, meaning that it dealt largely with comical personal catastrophe. He was also a versifier of no mean skill with an extraordinary facility for rhyming and a genuine feeling for poetic beauty and verbal melody. He could express himself in rhyme almost as easily as in prose and he seemed incapable of a false quantity in his written work.

I can give no better illustration of his poetic feeling and gift of impromptu rhyming than by relating the history of a quatrain that has been often printed and attributed to "Oxford rhymesters" and other persons of presumable culture. When Robert Louis Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses* reached *Puck* office, Munkittrick read it through with keen attention and then remarked as he laid the book aside:

> Austin, Austin, Austin, Dobby, Dobby, Dobby;
> Although writing verses seems to be your hobby,
> Stevenson can take you, with Gosse and Andy Lang,
> And knock your heads together with a bang, bang, bang.

A friend of mine told me that he once repeated these lines to Austin Dobson and that the latter did not seem to think them very funny.

The themes in which Munkittrick excelled were such homely ones on the antics of the goat, the putting up and taking down of the stove-pipe, the unwelcome visit of the mother-in-law and the inebriate's return from the lodge meeting. His verse, however, often had a really fine serious quality and if he failed to dispose of it in this form he would change it by the addition of what he called "a comic snapper" and contribute it to *Puck*.

Among the frequenters of the office at this time were Ernest Harvier, now well known as a political writer; Andrew E. Watrous, who lived to become one of the best editorial writers in the city; Julian Magnus, C. C. Starkweather, Maurice Barrymore and George H. Jessop the dramatist, who later inherited an estate in Ireland and thereafter lived abroad and never failed to entertain such of his old friends as presented themselves at his door.

Jessop had been a newspaper man in San Francisco before he became a dramatist and was present in his capacity as dramatic critic at Modjeska's début there as an English-speaking actress. Deeply impressed by her talents he imparted his opinion the next day to a manager named Harry Sergeant and the latter made haste to sign the Polish artist for her first American tour.

Jessop was the great-grandson of a jovial Irish baronet who lived in a remote part of Ireland, and one night two young men paused in the village to ask a peasant which was the best house there, meaning of course the best house of call. The peasant indicated the baronet's manor house which was the finest place of residence, and thither the two travelers made their way and

asked to be entertained for the night. The baronet courteously asked their names and saw that one of them was the son of an old friend of his and, realizing that they had mistaken his home for an inn, amused himself by assuming the mien of a landlord and obsequiously setting before them the best that the house afforded. So lavish was their entertainment that it was with fear and trembling that the young men asked for their bill the next morning and not until then did their host explain his joke. The son of his old friend was Oliver Goldsmith and the episode gave the latter the idea for *She Stoops to Conquer,* one of the classic comedies of the stage.

The German *Puck* had a succession of editors, many of whom died in the service and were cremated, their ashes, enclosed in jars, being actually kept as fitting German ornaments to the office and reminders of the fleeting nature of editorial life. The editor whom I best knew was Carl Hauser, well known to the entire German community as the embodiment of the humor of his race. Hauser's activities were not limited to the editorial desk. He published an annual almanac in which all German business men were expected to advertise, and in the spring he gave a humorous lecture, for which he was always prepared to sell tickets direct from his own hand to that of the consumer. He also derived a considerable income from the poems that he read at all sorts of gatherings, including funerals, christenings and club meetings. He possessed a great stock of these efforts carefully arranged and was adept in changing the verses written for Mr. Weingartner's obsequies to something

quite appropriate to the marriage of Mr. Blumenthal's daughter.

Hauser was a leading spirit in the *Schlaraffia,* of which I was the only American member. This typically German society was founded in Prague by certain easygoing, impecunious gentlemen whose idea was to enjoy at stated intervals an evening in *Schlaraffenland,* a mythical region in which care is unknown and roasted pigeons fly into the mouths of the hungry. Its membership grew until it embraced many persons of artistic talent, including composers like Abt and Genée, who wrote really fine choruses for it. At one of the Ladies' Nights of this society, Hauser was in the midst of a speech, when some ladies in the audience handed up to him a large doll-baby which they had prepared for his discomfiture. Hauser examined his prize and then addressed the donors in his native tongue causing such an outburst of laughter as I have never heard in my life. As the shrieks and yells subsided I turned to my neighbor and asked what it meant.

"Ach, dot Hauser, he is so funny!" he exclaimed, wiping the tears from his face. "He said, 'this child seems suffering for want of nourishment. Perhaps some lady in the audience will be able kindly to oblige.' "

Literature was by no means the profitable occupation that it is now. The *Century, Harper's,* and *Harper's Weekly* were the chief markets for the writer. Richard Watson Gilder, the *Century* editor, was a man of real literary taste and, thanks to him, writers began to receive the consideration that was their due. He paid for manuscript on acceptance and the signatures were printed

conspicuously, whereas *Harper's Magazine* had not allowed any signatures and had even printed as a serial William Black's "MacLeod of Dare," without the name of its author. The influence of the *Century,* was of course, very great, but not altogether beneficial. It certainly gave encouragement to young writers and Mr. Gilder was not slow to recognize merit in manuscript, but its contents were limited to matter which would not offend any one—a policy that is better for the counting-room than for the making of good literature. Of course it was the ambition of all of us to "get into the *Century*" as it was phrased, and Bunner and Jessop were about the only ones of our set who achieved that ambition. Bunner was distinctly a man of letters. Brought up to the reading habit under the eye of his Uncle Henry Tuckerman, who was himself a writer and connoisseur of good books, he belonged rather to the earlier period of Lowell, Holmes, Curtis and others than to his own.

It was Watrous who introduced us to Robert Louis Stevenson through the medium of a copy of "The New Arabian Nights," and Bunner promptly obtained an order from the *Century* for an essay on the new writer. I remember that he had a struggle because he insisted upon using the word genius, to which superlative Mr. Gilder hesitated to commit himself, but such was his enthusiasm that he threatened to withdraw his manuscript unless the word were allowed. It is pleasant to know that he gained his point, and equally pleasant to remember that we were the earliest of Stevenson's admirers in New York.

A man whom I came to know very well was E. J.

Henley, an actor of unusual nervous power only partly developed. He was a brother of W. E. Henley and in view of the attack made by that poet on the memory of Robert Louis Stevenson directly after the latter's death, the discussion that it caused and the pain it gave to Stevenson's friends and to the many thousands who had read and admired him, it may be pertinent to relate what the actor told me about the relations between the two, long before the novelist's death.

"We were little better than London street boys and had to make our way in the world in the face of every disadvantage. It was while my brother was lying ill in the common ward of the Edinburgh hospital that Stevenson read some verses he had written and ascertained his whereabouts and pitiful condition. He came at once to his bed-side, heartened him up as best he could, supplied him with delicacies and did everything in his power to put him on his feet. He did more than that. He encouraged him to write—and just then my poor brother needed all the encouragement he could get. He taught him how to support himself with his pen so that when he left his bed he had his living at his fingers' ends. No man ever had a better friend than Stevenson was to my brother."

And yet the sods had barely ceased to fall on his friend's coffin when the poet whom he had helped to place on his feet let loose his stream of jealous spleen, none the less malignant because it was couched in cunning terms.

Before the *Century* era we had had but few women writers, and of these only the most distinguished signed

their own names. Those of lesser standing or greater reticence wrote under alliterative names like Grace Greenwood, Jennie June, Fanny Fern, or Sophie Sparkle and devoted themselves chiefly to those homely domestic themes of chaste love and domesticity that lie so near the feminine heart. The new order developed many women writers and also thousands of readers of the same sex, to gain whose favor, and with it admission to the carefully guarded *Century* pages, it was necessary to depict life not as it was, but as these readers would like to have it. It was because of this necessity that the *San Francisco Argonaut,* at that time the best literary publication in the country, was looked to by all of us as a market for the best work we were capable of writing.

One thing that can be said of Mr. Gilder is that he discouraged a certain false school of fiction then affected by many of us who were writing under the influence of Bret Harte and of a certain side of Dickens. We could not imitate the remarkable story-telling gift of either of those men, but sentimentality and the idealization of criminals appealed to us strongly and we wasted much time and talent in pathetic accounts of dying burglars, babbling of their mothers and expiring with the heavenly forgiveness just in sight. We were also prone to become tearful over those noble women who had "erred" or "gone wrong" as we delicately phrased it and whose deathbeds were crowned with a halo of repentance as their last thoughts turned heavenward. Not until much later in life did I realize the utter falsity of this maudlin school of fiction. The real burglar is

never turned from his wicked ways by the innocent child who, awakened by his presence in her chamber on plunder bent, fires texts at him from her crib; nor does he ever refer to his mother except in terms of obloquy for having brought him into the world. As for the deathbeds conjured from our callow brains they were pitifully lacking in the pathos and solemnity that mark the ending of every human life, even that of an evil-doer. I have carried with me for many a year an unforgettable hospital memory of a priest, shadowed on a white screen as he shrived some passing soul, while the whole ward watched in reverent silence and a few feeble hands made the sign of the cross.

The last moments of the criminal are dominated by an unwillingness to talk and perhaps betray others, which is the best trait he has. When the placing of the white screen around his cot tells him that the end is near he turns his face to the whitewashed wall of the hospital and, like Beaufort, "dies and makes no sign." The truth is we were undergoing a sort of literary measles then and I am glad to record the fact that, thanks largely to their treatment at the hands of Mr. Gilder, none of the cases proved fatal.

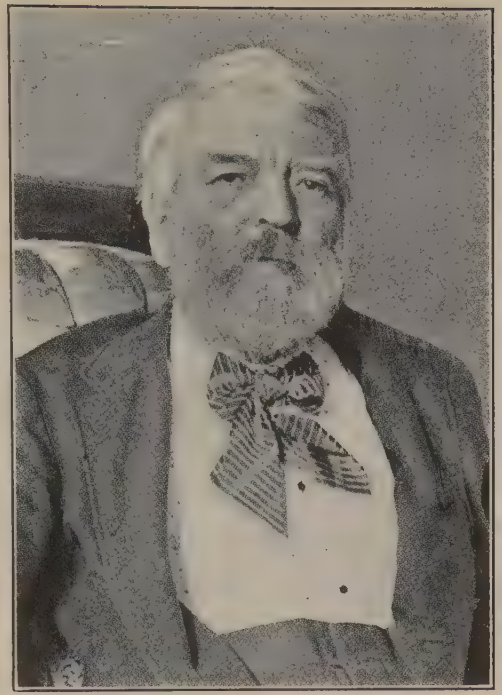
There was another juvenile complaint from which we all suffered and which the *Century* did nothing to alleviate. We called it local color and it produced a sort of rash of small details not worth mentioning. I think we caught that rash from Mr. Howells and Mr. James and allowed it to assume an exaggerated form, somewhat in this fashion:

"It was in bitter mood that Hiram Outhouse, plac-

ing one foot after the other, descended the steps of Millicent's home, for her prompt rejection of his suit had been a severe blow to his pride. As he gained the sidewalk he paused a moment for a last glance at the door which he felt would be henceforth closed to him, noting idly the number 124 engraved on its silver plate; then, turning his gaze across the street, he saw the numbers 123 and 125 staring ominously from two adjacent transoms. Car number 28, drawn by two gaunt horses, whose reins were held by an ill-clad driver, passed him as he stood irresolute. From the edge of the garbage can on the curb hung a banana peel, giving a bright note of color to the drab mass of ashes and waste paper and the cool grayness of the galvanized iron container. Far up the street Hiram's eye caught the last rays of the setting sun through the dim, overhanging haze, remote, intangible, quiescent."

That was the sort of stuff that we used to read to one another, seldom without eliciting friendly encomiums. As for poetry it was beyond the reach of all of us save the gifted few, though the *Ledger* afforded a market for a line of doggerel in which a few of us excelled. Munkittrick, who eked out his living with many of these potboilers, expressed his profound contempt for this doggerel and its markets, not including himself, and his criticism of the "one-rhyme-to-the-quatrain" bards often extended to their immediate ancestors. I wonder what he would have said to the "no-rhyme-to-the-quatrain" *vers libre* of the present.

Another complaint from which even adult writers suffered and which the *Century* encouraged instead of



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RICHARD HENRY STODDARD, POET AND CRITIC

Courtesy of Charles Scribner's Sons

J. BRANDER MATTHEWS, DRAMATIST, ESSAYIST AND SCHOLAR

checking, was the dialect rash that swept over the literary world with results that seem incredible to me now. During its prevalence stories of the most pitiful nature found a ready market so long as they were spelt wrong and, as the vulgates of the various races of the earth became exhausted, fraudulent ones, the products of fertile minds, replaced them. Straightway was our fiction enriched by Irishmen who said "be gobs" and "be jabers," Englishmen who said, "h'I h'invite h'everybody," and Frenchmen who said, "zis" and "zat." Some of these perversions have become permanently imbedded in our literature.

A still more distressing evil than this distortion of words, and one that can also be traced to the influences of the early Eighties, is the habit of misrepresenting life in order to please our best-buying public. I never take up a novel dealing with any of the few phases of life that I know about without feeling certain that many pages of mendacity will challenge my intelligence, and that, too, through the medium of characters, scenes and situations employed many times before. I know full well that in the tale of municipal politics the young reformer will "go down to live among the poor"—a deed of perennial delight to the feminine soul—and become a standing menace to the corrupt "saloon politicians" of the region; in the novel of Park Row the verdant reporter will be let loose to wander about the city at his own sweet will to secure "beats" of fabulous importance and "show up" iniquitous bankers and statesmen; and in the story of the theatre the young débutante will score an astounding success on her first appearance. The

last-named type of romance offers the widest opportunity to the fecund mind of the maker of best-sellers. The heroine may in sudden and fortuitous emergency play the leading part that she has understudied and achieve such signal triumph that the star falls upon her neck with cries of joy declaring that the ingénue must in future play the chief rôle; she may yield herself to the wicked manager and within six weeks find herself transformed by the magic alchemy of his craft into a best-drawing star, or she may arouse a tempest of enthusiasm on the occasion of her first appearance by the inspired utterance of the line that has ushered more than one musical comedy queen into public view: "Here come the soldiers!"

Through these preposterous tales many sanguine young people are lured from peaceful homes to worlds other than their own, there to meet the disillusionment that so often follows on the heels of inexperience. Some organization like the Sullivan clan will make short work of the callow reformer; the embryo moulder of public opinion will be sent to report the brick-layers' meeting and will soon learn that the practice of "getting something on somebody" is frowned upon in reputable offices; and all that awaits the young actress in her attempt to ascend the ladder is a matter too painful for recital in these cheerful pages.

But the *Century* did much to foster another literary evil that was not interred with the bones of that magazine's prosperity, but is now more flagrant than ever. It is a school of fiction founded on that idiot's pæan, "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world," and

representing life, not as it is, but as it should be. This school finds its chief expression in those "happy endings" which are essential to a best-selling novel. When a reader for a publishing house takes up a manuscript he turns at once to the last page and, if he finds that "Rosamond with her head buried on Reginald's shoulder and the story of love, ever old, ever new, gladdening her ears, found the rest and peace that had been so long denied her," he goes back to the beginning, confident that the story contains at least one element of success.

To this school of fiction we owe the brats of the Pollyanna type, together with many maudlin tales designed to make the reader feel benevolent without spending a cent. The best of these is *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch,* which I confess to have read with moistened eyes, saying to myself as I reached the end, "if I had Rockefeller's money I would give that woman all our family washing."

This school of fiction is only great when measured by its consumption of paper, but it has not yet produced anything equal in quality to *Vanity Fair, The Tale of Two Cities, The Man Without a Country,* or Alphonse Daudet's *Siege of Berlin,* not one of which had an ending calculated to please a publisher. The same spirit of cheery optimism prevails in our theatre, with the result that a really amusing comedy is often spoiled by a maudlin finish designed to please an audience that has but little respect for the verities of human life.

The success of *Puck* led to the starting of other humorous publications, notably *Judge* and *Life,* and also

to an increasing demand for comic paragraphs in other periodicals. John A. Mitchell started *Life* in one corner of his studio at Twenty-seventh Street and Broadway, with Henry Guy Carleton as editor, and Andrew Miller, hidden behind a screen, as business manager. Edward S. Martin occupied the same position at the beginning that he does at the present day and was also financially interested though he disposed of his share a short time later. The success of *Life* was due primarily to the fact that Mitchell was a man of high principle who made his integrity and sincerity felt in every number of his publication, and there is no business in which those qualities are so valuable as in humorous journalism. Moreover he did not imitate *Puck* but blazed an entirely new trail in black and white illustration, founding a school of which Charles Dana Gibson, who did his first work for *Life,* became and remained the acknowledged head, with countless imitators. We used to call *Life's* pictures "Buttericks," because of their resemblance to pictures in a fashion magazine, but it was the reflection of fashionable life as never before shown in a comic paper, that made this one popular from the start. However, Carleton's "Thompson Street Poker Club" sketches, dealing with a group of colored players, proved one of the earliest of *Life's* successful hits.

The various Harper publications now opened their doors to the humorous writer, and many were the poets and jokesmiths who availed themselves of this new and extensive market. The Harpers paid on acceptance for these offerings and there was one bard of our crowd who used to put in his verses at one window and watch

their course through the glass partition as they were read and accepted, turned over to a clerk to be entered and passed from him to the cashier who paid for them. To those behind the partition this poet with his nose pressed against the glass must have looked like an inquisitive fish in an aquarium.

A good many of us took up this line of work only to discover that it was foolish to use up a whole idea in a single paragraph instead of padding it out into something longer. John Kendrick Bangs was the most prolific among us all and William J. Henderson also contributed verse and paragraphs. But Henderson could do many things before he settled down to the craft of musical criticism in which he now excels. He could play on the piano and compose music and at one time he was managing editor of *Puck*. I have even seen him in the box-office of his father's theatre and—low be it spoken—I have heard him sing in comic opera, arrayed in fancy clothes and a plumed hat. None of us is ever safe from his own past.

CHAPTER IX

LOOKING back across the intervening years to this period we see the beginnings of what were destined to become two important markets for literary outputs, newspaper syndicates and the cheap magazines. The former was the first to arrive, and according to my memory, Allen Thorndike Rice was the earliest of the syndicate proprietors. He conceived the idea of purchasing essays from the most distinguished pens in this and other countries and selling them to newspapers for simultaneous publication. That system, of course, did not benefit the young fellows who had yet to make names of commercial value, and it was not until Irving Bacheller and S. S. McClure entered the field that we began to profit by it.

I believe that it was Bacheller who followed Rice in the syndicate business and one of his first ventures was a weekly letter signed by George Parsons Lathrop and to which I contributed a share. The Bacheller syndicate grew in importance and in scope until its founder achieved unexpected success with a novel called *Eben Holden* and turned his attention to literature, disposing of his profitable business to Mr. John Brisben Walker. The ever venturesome and enterprising McClure now showed his hand in the game and, like Rice, dealt with writers of assured position. I met him one day on Ann

Street with a list of pawnbrokers in his hand which he offered for my inspection, paying me the dubious compliment of thinking me an expert and remarking that he was going to pawn his household goods and invest the proceeds in a story by Frank Stockton. I was at that time on my way to kite a cheque for the furtherance of my own business but I paused to offer a word of remonstrance, begging him not to jeopardize the bed in which he slept and the kitchen utensils in which his food was prepared in order to buy any literature except my own. The result of my harangue was that McClure tore up his list of pawnbrokers and went his way to an ultimate success that he richly deserved.

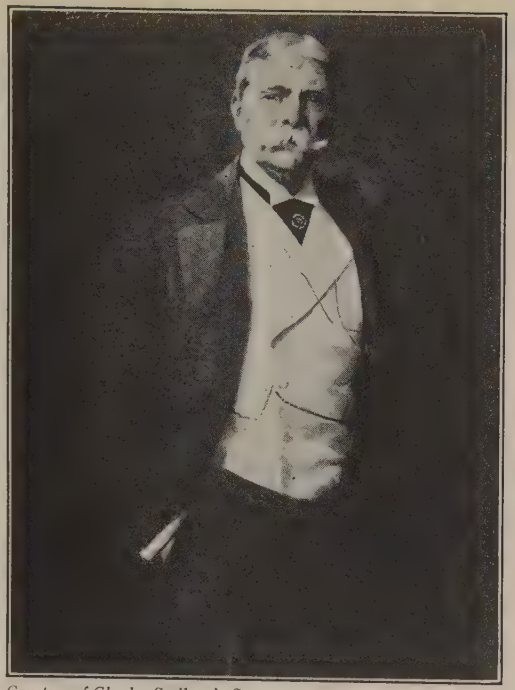
After this, syndicates sprang up like mushrooms—I was interested in two or three myself—it was a business that required but little capital, but scarcely any of those early ventures became permanent. McClure was successful, however, and his magazine grew out of his syndicate and its earlier numbers were made up of matter already printed in newspapers.

The credit for being the originator of the ten-cent magazine has been claimed by three pioneers, S. S. McClure, Frank A. Munsey and J. Brisben Walker, but I think it really belongs to Mr. Munsey. Certainly he struck the keynote of popular taste with remarkable accuracy and produced a publication that has found countless imitators. Born and reared in a Maine rural district, he began life as a telegraph operator and was still following that occupation when his first stories were written. Meanwhile he was acquiring a knowledge of what the element, called by Mr. Lincoln "the plain peo-

ple," really wanted and it was with this knowledge in his head, some manuscript stories in his valise and a very slender capital in his purse, that he came to New York to enter upon his career. I think the *Argosy* was his first venture and *Munsey's Weekly,* now a monthly and then a comic publication, edited by John Kendrick Bangs, his next. For a time he had hard sledding and it was not until the result of his previous studies of popular taste was shown in *Munsey's Magazine* that his real success began. I may add that the years of his struggle are greatly to the credit of his sagacity and integrity.

Munsey's success was based on his keen comprehension of the fact that people are more interesting than things. Therefore he filled his pages with portraits of men and women more or less before the public, with fiction dealing with human life, and with comments on literature and the stage. We soon found that it was impossible to pay our holiday expenses by articles on "In the Mists Above Mt. Washington" or "'Mid the Dancing Waves of Montauk," illustrated by snap-shots. It was not many years before his two publications were yielding him an income of nearly a million a year. In short, as a conductor of magazines Mr. Munsey showed extraordinary acumen; but when, in later years, he became a newspaper owner—Oh, my! Oh, my! Oh, my!

There was at this time in New York a moribund publication called the *American Magazine* for which one Valerian Gribayedoff, an illustrator, had done some work and for which he was trying in vain to extort payment. Artist-like his thoughts turned to vengeance and he wrote a letter to the *New York World* warning



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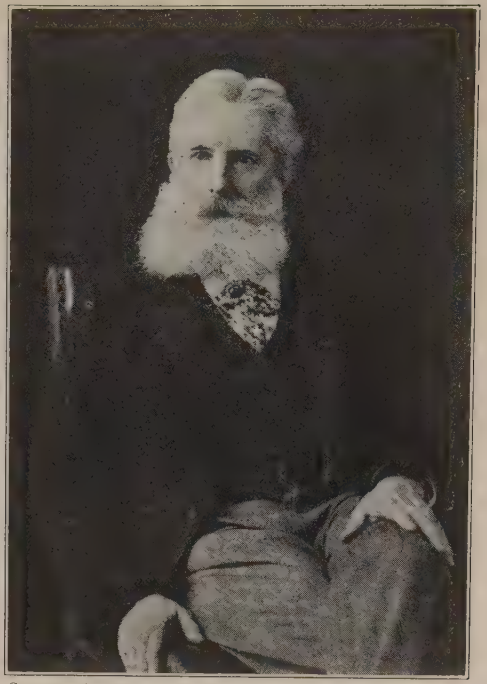
F. Hopkinson Smith, Engineer, Artist and Author



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Edmund C. Stedman, Banker and Poet

all artists and writers to be wary in their dealings with the *American*. Sometime after this he was surprised by a call from the business manager of the magazine and at once prepared himself for a row. To his amazement the visitor handed him a cheque for the amount due him and thanked him cordially for the letter of warning printed in the *World*. It seemed that it had attracted the attention of J. Brisben Walker, then on the look-out for an opportunity in the magazine business, and he had purchased the *American* with the intention of calling it the *Cosmopolitan*, under which title it is still published. Beginning, as had Munsey, with the price of twenty-five cents, he soon announced a reduction to twelve and a half cents and the very next evening I happened to encounter McClure on the Boston boat.

"Did you see what Walker is going to do?" he exclaimed. "Well, I am going on to Boston now to borrow five thousand dollars so as to put my magazine down to ten cents," and it was in the cheaper form that both monthlies appeared almost simultaneously. These three magazines and their successors in the field, notably the *Saturday Evening Post*, have proved of enormous importance, not only in widening the market for literary work but also in spreading a taste for reading to every part of the country.

Mr. George H. Lorimer, the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, does not prate about his "hundred per cent Americanism," or style his paper a "journal of uplift," yet the wholesome influence that it carries into the hearts of millions of readers is, I am convinced, of

inestimable value to the nation. More than any other publication does it reflect the spirit of that early statesman who declared all Americans to be free and equal, for it is as eagerly read by the highly educated as by those who dwell on lonely farms and ranches and to whom such a journal at the price of five cents is a veritable godsend.

Quite as successful and even more influential in its own field is the *Ladies' Home Journal,* whose history has been written in *The Americanization of Edward Bok,* an autobiography that reminds one of Hogarth's portrayal of the rise of the "Industrious Apprentice." But Mr. Bok is singularly modest in his recital of a life-journey that began on the bank of a Dutch canal and proceeded through peaceful Brooklyn shades to the "City of Brotherly Love," where triumphant achievement was attained. He tells us with a charming lack of reticence of his study of the art of publicity and of that abounding faith in the value of name that has dominated his career. Failing to secure a contribution from Mr. Gladstone he accepted one from Mrs. Gladstone and discovered that it answered just as well. But he does not tell us that he not only created a school of periodical journalism but also blazed the trail for every attempt in that direction that has followed. He might have said with perfect truth that he has had no competitors, merely imitators, and that he has thus impressed his unique individuality on all American womanhood through the medium of his own journal and a dozen more besides.

The hand that rocks the cradle is said to rule the world, but what can we say of him whose hand strokes

and pats that cradle-rocking hand? So great has been his influence that his autobiography should have been called not "The Americanization of Edward Bok," but the "Edward Bokanization of America."

About this time a friend of mine wrote a book entitled *How to Win at Poker,* for which he received a cheque of ample dimensions which he promptly cashed according to long established literary and artistic custom. The same evening he sat in a friendly game of draw and at an early hour the next morning signed his name to two "I O U's" and departed with empty pockets to brood over the mutability of human affairs. I mention this episode because it has enabled me to fix the exact date at which I lost forever all confidence in printed essays on financial topics. It may be remembered that some years before this Mr. William R. Travers was asked if he had read Mr. Henry Clews' last pamphlet on finance and made prompt and terse reply, "I hope so."

We might have been bohemians but we did not know it, although we dined at table d'hôtes in a manner that nowadays imparts the true touch of bohemianism to every one sufficiently sophisticated to call the wine "red ink." The professional bohemian was unknown then and it was not until years later that he began to perform for the benefit of visitors from the suburbs and the upper west side as he does to-day in the purlieus of Washington Square and Greenwich Village. We flocked from one of these little restaurants to another and were always

quick to scent a newer or a better one. I recall one place of rendezvous in Wooster Street, kept by an attractive young French widow of winning address and most discreet behavior. Many of her dishes were of her own concoction and it was perhaps this fact that won for her the regard of a young artist to whom she later became engaged. Forthwith there came from the west the artist's father with the intention of inspecting the prospective bride and passing judgment on her. He arrived one Sunday morning and about noon that day I entered the restaurant and saw a short, rather rotund man seated against the wall sound asleep. On the table before him were the remains of a breakfast such as few of us ever had the courage to order, a meal that was supplemented by the contents of one or two pint bottles bearing labels calculated to command the respect of the connoisseur. Madame appeared in her kitchen doorway, glanced at the sleeper and then smiled at me in a manner that told me that the victory was won.

We all drank a great deal in those days, for Prohibition had not yet reared its hydrant head and I have no doubt that some of us drank more than was good for us. Later years proved that John Barleycorn put more than one good man under the ground, but nevertheless social drinking—we were none of us sneak drinkers—was not without its benefits to ambitious young souls. To this day I feel grateful to many men, older and more experienced than myself, for the counsel and encouragement that they used to give me over beer and wine-stained tables in and near Washington Square. I am confident, too, that young writers and artists of the

present day do not enjoy such friendly interest as was shown to me. Nor can I imagine colloquies such as those that taught me so much about the trade of writing taking place over glasses of ice-water. On the whole I do not regret the many glasses of cheering fluid that passed my lips in those happy days when it was so easy to get it.

And with the dawn of this decade there was released from its hiding place a genie that had been practically bottled up since it had ceased to serve Barnum—a genie that was destined under the name of press-agent to exercise a tremendous influence in theatrical affairs, and under its more recent name of publicity director to become a misleading power in our nation.

I regard the modern science of publicity as one of the great evils of the day and a distinct menace to the charm and beauty of private life. It has given us a false perspective of life, caused us to revere the unworthy, and thrown into the background those persons of real distinction who are too proud to get themselves into print.

Few people are aware of the number of false reputations that this scheme has created and a still smaller number know how to discriminate between genuine fame and cheap notoriety, so closely do the publicity agents imitate the former. I find it a pleasure sometimes to think of a few persons whom I have known who have impressed me as far greater than their renown, and it is a noteworthy fact that personal modesty was a distinguishing trait in each one of them.

Mary Anderson was the first modern American star to employ a press-agent whose duties were limited to the

sending out of brief paragraphs designed to lessen the work of the dramatic editor. Before long this system was elaborated until it reached a form of press work quite popular in those simple days with the theatrical profession, especially on the distaff side, namely, the personal anecdote in which the talents or the private virtues of the star were gracefully exploited. These were used chiefly in the out-of-town papers and the manager would often order a stock of them from young writers like myself before setting out on his tour. They were all short and to the point and diamond robberies were tabooed. A sample of them that I recall was, in brief, as follows: "A young clergyman recently denounced the modern stage in the presence of a fashionable company and was surprised at the earnest, almost tearful eloquence with which a beautiful young woman, who had previously remained modestly in the background, defended the profession from the charges made against it. 'Who is that charming young lady?' he inquired of his hostess when an opportunity was offered. 'That,' she replied, 'is the actress Estelle Boneset who will appear at the Academy of Music next Monday night.' "

But the further development of the science was due to the methods introduced by the foreign stars who began to arrive in this country very early in the Eighties. The first of these was Madame Patti, whose tour was a horrible example of that which may happen to any one who ignores the tastes of the American public, and a repetition of Rachel's disastrous season here. It also proved a boon to the native impresario for under the

direction of Henry E. Abbey the tide in her fortunes changed and she went home materially richer than she came. Patti relied on the fact that she was not only the greatest singer in the world, but also the one most widely advertised and therefore in a position to dispense with the services of both manager and press agent. But her business acumen began and ended with her extraordinary aptitude for the making of contracts and their merciless enforcement. She secured Steinway Hall, announced a staggering scale of prices—I think the best seats were ten dollars—and entrusted the direction of her affairs to the needy Italian followers whom she placed in the box-office. I attended her first concert—it is needless to say on free tickets—and even to my comparatively untrained perceptions it was evident that most of the audience had arrived by a route similar to mine. The seats directly about me were occupied by the friends and relatives of the janitor of the building. In a very few days it was announced that she would appear under Mr. Abbey's management.

Mr. Abbey was in my opinion the greatest *entrepreneur* of foreign atractions of modern times and his direction of the first tour of Sarah Bernhardt was convincing proof of his ability. Bernhardt herself had long been regarded in Europe as a complete mistress of the art of self-advertisement by methods so closely resembling those of one of our countrymen as to gain her the nickname of "Sarah Barnum." Long before her appearance here, public curiosity had been tickled by stories of her attenuated figure—"an empty carriage drove up to the stage door of the *Theâtre Français* and

Sarah Bernhardt alighted," of the son whom she called her *"petit accident,"* and of the coffin in which she slept; consequently her first audience in Booth's Theatre was one of the largest and most remarkable gatherings ever seen in a New York playhouse. Many people came, as they did later in other cities, to see if she were really as thin as reputed, if she looked like the "bad woman" she was said to be, and also that they might be able to say they had seen her. On the occasion to which I have alluded she captivated her audience by her superb art and by her exquisite voice. That not many of those present understood French was made apparent to her in rather startling fashion by a sudden rustling and flashing of white leaves that occurred when the first page of the librettos were turned.

Although Sarah Bernhardt's fame was honestly won by the exercise of her talents, she was nevertheless her own press-agent, and a rarely good one, too. She was one of the few modern actresses who was her own manager in the real sense of the word and when she "worked the press" at the beginning of a new season, she did it with skill and judgment.

As an instance of this I recall her arrival in this country after an absence of a few years and the frank manner in which she drew attention to her age. When the reporters greeted her on the deck of the incoming steamer she took each one by the hand saying: "What do you think? This kind *Captain Chose* gave me a dinner last night because it was my sixty-fifth birthday. I hope you don't think I am too old for my last American tour!"

Almost any other actress would have ignored the subject of passing years or else claimed an age less than her own, but Bernhardt knew what she was doing when she gave the widest publicity to her sixty-five years. Wherever she appeared people said how young she looked and that was precisely the effect she desired to make. If she had claimed to be forty they would have said how old she looked.

Henry Irving's methods were entirely different from hers. He always seemed to me to be acting off the stage as well as on and in both phases of his art to be supreme. Not even his mannerisms, of which the unthinking spoke so frequently, could dim the lustre of his legitimate fame. After all, we have no evidence that Matthias did not drag one leg after another or that Louis XI did not speak with a drawl. Irving's art wiped out these minor defects and as a producer, he raised the entire standard of theatrical representation in this country and left us under permanent obligation to him. Moreover he always gave the public the very best that was in him and kept his company up to the mark in every particular. There was no difference between the performance given in Broadway and that in one of the smaller towns.

Mr. Irving excelled also in the manifold arts that compel public interest, and to these he added that which awakens profound respect. His pose was that of a kindly, dignified, somewhat mysterious and thoroughly intellectual personage. His press work—if it may so be called—was as much above that to which we were then accustomed as was his art above his mannerisms, and so adroitly administered to our gullible public that we failed

to detect its purpose. Studied through the clearer spectacles of hindsight, it seems to me that his first attempt to pave the way for his American tour was made when Edwin Booth failed to interest London audiences. Irving stepped forward at once, and with a whole-souled zeal to befriend a fellow artist, arranged for their joint appearance on the Lyceum stage and for some time they played together in apparent brotherly amity. But that stage was controlled by Irving himself and those familiar with the possibilities open to an actor who is also his own stage manager will readily believe that in this case the Englishman was no sufferer. Booth, although not of a suspicious nature, soon realized that he had fallen into a sort of trap, but to the American public, Irving was seen in the light of one anxious to show his good will to a colleague in need of help. Although chafing under the position in which he had been placed, Booth could do nothing but acquiesce.

It was, therefore, as a great artist and a dominant intellectual force in the English theatre, that Irving came to this country while the halo of his generous treatment of America's favorite player still clung to his brow. Too great an artist to ignore the value of competent support and adequate surroundings, he brought with him Miss Ellen Terry, Mr. George Wenman and an admirable company together with his own scenery and costumes, and a staff that included several men of letters who were quite competent to record his triumphs in the English newspapers. His manager was Bram Stoker, an Irishman of great suavity and even greater ability.

Disdaining the method common among inferior actors

of displaying himself at the expense of his associates, he encouraged them to do their most effective work in his support, the result being that the Irving troupe soon gained a high reputation for their well balanced performances. The fact that he must have known that Miss Terry was really the drawing card of his entertainments did not arouse his jealousy to the point of trying to "smother" her work to the advantage of his own, after a fashion all too common among inferior stars. On the contrary he made the best use possible of her gifts, though I do not recall any play in which she could demonstrate her greater popularity by appearing without him.

Apart from their artistic excellence Irving's tours in this country proved a veritable commercial triumph. His motto, like that of the box-office manager, was "give the people what they want," but he paid us the supreme compliment of assuming that we wanted the best that in him lay and he gave it to us in full measure and without regard to cost, careful, the while, so to impress the public mind with his outlay that no one resented the high price of his tickets. His attitude toward us was that of one generously concerned with the American drama and its people. In his speeches and interviews he paid wordy tribute to the American stage and predicted for it a glorious future.

"I look to see the time when your drama will overshadow that of all other countries. With your varied population, with the culture and refinement of your great cities, the ruddy vigor of the far west you have no need to draw inspiration from foreign sources. With such noble backgrounds as the Rocky Mountains, the vast

level prairies and the broad Mississippi rolling to the sea you have the *mise en scène* for a hundred great virile dramas that shall deal with the actual life and the elementary passions of the most progressive nation on earth. You have already among you many noble dramatists whose work I hope to produce at some not far distant date and I have been surprised more than once at the high quality of some of the American plays that it has been my good fortune to witness."

All of this and much like it was eagerly swallowed by a public that has always liked to have its pills of information sugar-coated. From time to time Mr. Irving went further than this and would say to his manager, "Bram, I think it is time to purchase another American play. Whose turn is it now?" And straightway would appear the announcement that the distinguished English actor had been so deeply impressed by the manuscript submitted to him by somebody, not infrequently a critic, that he had purchased the rights for this country and England and her dependencies with the intention of producing it next season. And that would be the last ever heard of this manuscript that had impressed him so profoundly.

Unlike more recent British visitors to our shores, Irving showed no disposition to accept generous hospitality without making equally generous return. He seldom appeared in any large city without entertaining the friends whom he made there, and he thought nothing of going direct from the stage to the supper room after his performance and remaining there an interested and interesting talker, until the small hours of the morning. His physical endurance was a marvel to those who knew him.

On one occasion, I think it was between his first and second tours, he crossed the ocean for the sole purpose of giving a great and costly dinner to his friends.

Another example of shrewd and convincing press work that must be credited to an alien source was the American tour of Oscar Wilde, the ostensible purpose of which was to lecture on the various forms of aestheticism, which he then affected, but which was in reality projected by D'Oyley Carte to pave the way for the production of *Patience*. Wilde exhibited himself in knickerbockers and with a sunflower in his buttonhole, and wherever he went the local "intelligentsia"—they were called then by another name—came in crowds to see and hear him. The result of this tour was that he went back to England with well-lined pockets, leaving behind him a public educated up to the point of understanding Gilbert's exquisite satire.

But behind this pose lurked many admirable qualities. William Henderson, the manager of the Standard Theatre, at which the opera was to be given, invited Wilde to visit him at his Long Branch home, and his son told me that the family looked forward with dismay to entertaining a person whom they regarded as little better than a freak. Greatly to their surprise they found him a most agreeable and witty guest who played a good game of tennis and, discarding all affectation, made himself distinctly agreeable in the home circle. It has always seemed to me that Wilde's tour, which excited much ridicule, was a case of "who laughs last, laughs best."

CHAPTER X

A YOUNG man who had the keen showman's instinct and a native *flair* for publicity was Steve Brodie, whom I first knew when he was plying his trade as a bootblack. Immediately after the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge certain hare-brained individuals tried to attract attention to themselves by leaping from it and each of these attempts ended tragically. Brodie was at this time selling newspapers and although he could not write at all and could only read the captions, he had a shrewd understanding of the power of newspaper fame and rightly considered that he who first leaped from the Bridge and lived to tell the tale would acquire a renown which could be turned to profitable account. Therefore he interested an east side liquor dealer named Moritz Herzberg in his desperate venture and the latter agreed to back him in a Bowery liquor saloon should he survive the jump. He did survive, and an appreciative press bestowed upon him a degree of publicity that was far greater than he had expected. Almost before his clothes were dry he was standing behind his bar taking in money, and his business continued to thrive until he had amassed a comfortable fortune. Meanwhile he kept alive interest in himself by various exploits of a kind known in Park Row as "good news stories," but at last, on a certain first of April, he circulated news of his own death, re-

appearing in person the next day to deny it. After this the editors of the New York newspapers notified him that his name would not be printed again until he really was dead and his last days were spent under the shadow of distasteful obscurity.

It was about the time of Steve Brodie's sudden rise into fame that I was introduced to a seedy individual of melancholy aspect who told me that he was "an inventor of uprights" and then proceeded to explain this, to me, novel occupation. I did not realize it then but this sombre character was the pioneer of what has since become a great profession for he was one of the first to comprehend and trade profitably on the personal vanity that aspires to undeserved fame. His method was quite simple. He wrote a panegyric of the sort that might be applied to almost any vain and stupid man and began somewhat in this fashion: "Among the upright citizens of the metropolis are more than one who have been prevented by modesty from taking that position in the public eye to which their character and abilities entitled them. Such an one is ——" and here he would leave a blank to be filled in with the name of any one ass enough to pay for the printing of this eulogy in some starving sheet.

His clients or victims were termed "uprights" in the lexicon of an industry which was then rapidly growing and he who succeeded in instilling in the veins of a new victim the poison of a thirst for notoriety was said to "invent him."

I talked with this sad man long and earnestly and learned that the profession of what I may term "up-

right" was made up of inventors and solicitors and that the latter called upon business and professional men in their offices and with scarcely a word of introduction read aloud in impressive tones the panegyric prepared for the inventor. So entrancing was the sound of these rounded periods that no one whose attention was once engaged ever lost interest until the final word. It was then comparatively easy to obtain his order for so many hundred copies of the paper in which it was to be printed.

I was almost startled when this man told me the names of the various citizens whom he had transformed into "uprights" and once enmeshed in this class there seemed to be no escape. Cyrus W. Field was an "upright" whose thirst for publicity was never fully quenched and I know of one occasion when a solicitor called at his house during an evening party, beckoned Field into the hall and there read to him a most fulsome essay in praise of his character and achievements, to which the creator of the Atlantic Cable listened with the delight of a child, and for which he paid liberally.

An inventor and solicitor of "uprights" of remarkable ability and a positive genius in discovering wellsprings of latent human vanity and successfully preying upon them was E. Campbell Allison, a native of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and the possessor of a colossal nerve. Allison lived by extracting small sums of money from all sorts of persons under all sorts of pretexts and his exploits furnished his acquaintances with no small amusement. With loftier ambitions he might have taken rank among the leading swindlers of the town, but he was content with small returns and was enough of an artist

to enjoy his work for its own sake. One of his methods for instilling the germs of uprightness in a prospective victim of the substantial sort was to inform him that there was a movement on foot to nominate him for the mayoralty, and it was amazing to see how many "prominent citizens" were caught in this trap.

Allison crowned his career with one remarkable achievement. He went to London—heaven alone knows how he secured the money—with the intention of introducing the "upright" business in that metropolis, but the Britons failed to nibble at his bait, although he actually started a weekly paper for their special benefit. It was at this time that a committee headed by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer visited England for the purpose of presenting to Mr. Gladstone a silver testimonial for which the readers of the *World* had contributed. Allison followed them down to Hawarden and by ostentatiously lending aid to the photographer, who was burdened with his paraphernalia, managed to gain entrance to the grounds. When a group consisting of the Pulitzers, Gladstones and one or two distinguished guests, assembled to be photographed, Allison stationed himself behind a tree and the moment the camera was adjusted, darted out and placed himself in a conspicuous position just behind the unsuspecting statesman. His presence having been discovered he was ejected from the scene and another picture taken. He secured a negative of the original, however, had several copies printed on stiff cardboard and these portraits served him as a means of livelihood to the end of his days.

He was absolutely broke at this time and without the

means of returning to New York, but the Phoenix Park tragedy was filling the columns of the newspapers and he went to the office of the *London Times* and related a circumstantial conversation that he had overheard in a railway carriage between two men, whose appearance he described with a detail that was so convincing, that he was paid fifty pounds for the fable and was thus able to embark on the next steamer.

The Gladstone photograph was so large that he had to have a special pocket made in his coat to contain it and he employed it in this fashion. He had great skill in the art of making acquaintance with strangers and was an adept in picking out gullible ones on whom he always made a favorable impression. These he would entertain with accounts of his visit abroad, would lead the conversation to amateur photography and remark that the Prince of Wales, the finest gentleman he had ever met, found in that art his favorite diversion.

"The Prince came down to the Gladstones when I was stopping there, along with the Pulitzers and insisted upon taking a picture of us all out on the lawn. It was one of the best pictures you ever saw; he ought to be a professional."

About this time the gullible one would say to himself with the cunning of his kind, "I wonder if this fellow takes me for a fool?"

Then Allison would continue, "By the way, I think I've got one of those pictures with me now," and in a moment the victim would be gazing with amazement at what seemed to him a complete confirmation of the other's tale. There before his eyes were the unmistak-

able likenesses of Gladstone, Pulitzer and the bland and affable stranger across the table from him. A moment of weakness would follow leaving him vulnerable to an assault on his pocketbook.

From that day to this, newspaper puffery has had but scant appeal for me. When I read one of the interesting anecdotes of authors that the publishers are so glad to supply, I think of the personal anecdotes that I used to write, and when I see an eulogy of some obscure or worthless citizen, I know he is not the great man that printer's ink would make him but merely a vain "upright" paying for his renown.

Publicity has even become the favorite hand maiden of the book publishing trade, where it reveals itself in personal anecdotes of authors and in banquets given in their honor. As a giver of dinners in which gracious hospitality and the main chance were deftly blended, Colonel Harvey, now the United States Ambassador to Great Britain, was without a peer, and in the Mark Twain banquet his talents rose to the height of genius, surpassing even the repeated efforts of Sir Thomas Lipton to stimulate the tea and jam trade by the transfusion of "sporting blood" into its veins.

The Mark Twain dinner bore on its face the aspect of a spontaneous tribute on the part of the profession of letters to a fellow member of the craft who well deserved the honor, and it was by fortuitous circumstance that its occurrence was coincident with the issue of the new and complete edition of his writings. Invitations were sent, not only to authors of the first rank, but also to scores of lesser note; nor were they confined to resi-

dents of Manhattan or to those on the Harper list. So generous and far-reaching was the Colonel's hospitality that in the company gathered about his board, Scribner authors sat cheek by jowl with those culled from the Dodd-Mead and Appleton lists; dialect experts from every corner of the land made furtive studies of the urban vernacular, and gray-haired Houghton-Mifflinites raised their glasses in courteous salute to poetesses from mid-western and New England towns. Not since round-eyed wonder-seekers looked through the cage-bars at Barnum's "Happy Family" had such a varied assembly been seen in perfect amity. From his place in the exact centre of the principal table and with the guest of honor at his right hand Colonel Harvey viewed the scene through the first pair of horn spectacles ever seen in the publishing trade, while his heart swelled with pride at the thought that none was present save for a useful purpose.

And every one of the diners earned more than the salt to his or her porridge. The names of the distinguished authors gave lustre to the newspaper accounts of the banquet; the grizzled Houghton-Mifflinites returned to Boston and spread glad tidings of the event through that book-reading town; and even more valuable results were obtained from writers of feebler renown who had made the journey, at their own cost, from remote regions. Civic pride, a negligible quantity in New York, grows stronger and stronger as we pass Rahway in our journey toward the setting sun, and the small town poetess of Iowa was sure to have the fact that she had been bidden to the great banquet chronicled in large type in all the county papers. Like publicity would be given to her

departure for New York and on her return she would be interviewed at great length. For weeks the name of Mark Twain and the titles of his best known books would be kept conspicuously before the public of many territories and it was during this period that the largest sales were effected.

Such masterly achievements as this confirm my belief that we are, as many learned philosophers have declared, living in a commercial age and I commend them to the attention of whatever publishing house may have the good fortune to print these simple memoirs of a useful life. Nor am I averse to the "personal anecdote" method of exploitation provided I profit by it. Therefore if my publishers believe—in their trade, to believe is to know—that by chronicling the fact that I once played chess with another writer, of course on their list, and lost the game, or that my great-uncle was the first man in Schoharie County to die of the mumps, by all means let them do their worst.

In the early Eighties my work as a dramatic writer led me to the Thalia Theatre, where excellent performances were given in German under the management of Carl Herrmann. The Thalia, which had enjoyed a long and distinguished history as the Bowery Theatre, where the greatest English-speaking actors had appeared, was now catering to the German population and the region itself had a strong German flavor. Directly over the way was the Windsor, the first of what might be called the "neighborhood houses" of the sort now found on the "subway circuit," by which I mean theatres in which pieces that had had their run on Broadway were given

at reduced prices. Originally the Stadt Theatre, it had introduced many fine German artists to New York and it was here that Wachtel, the tenor of "high C" reputation—he introduced that note with sensational results into "Di quella pira" in *Il Trovatore*—was discovered by Mapleson and engaged for the Academy of Music.

The Thalia was now introducing many German operettas and it was a source of supply to Mr. Daly, so it occurred to me that by judicious press work American as well as German playgoers could be attracted. I applied for the position of press-agent and during two seasons combined the duties of that office with my other work. It was a useful and interesting experience which I always recall with pleasure. Carl Herrmann, an ex-officer of the Austrian service, who had come to this country after killing his superior officer in a duel, was manager of the house, and Heinrich Conreid, a graduate of the famous company maintained by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, was the stage-manager and it was I who gave him his earliest notoriety. I can truthfully say that my services were valuable, for English-speaking playgoers soon began to flock to the theatre and when *The Merry War* was produced at the close of my first season it ran a whole month to large business and even disgusted many of the regular patrons who desired frequent changes of bill.

I began my labors by exploiting Sardou's *Divorçons,* given here for the first time in New York with that admirable comedian, Adolf Link, who is still appearing on the English-speaking stage, as the waiter. The star or "guest" of the company was Kathi Schratt, who

afterward became widely known as the friend of the Emperor Francis Joseph and whose death followed shortly after his own. She was by far the finest Cyprienne I have ever seen, and I have always tried to see the play when it was produced elsewhere. Chaumont, who, if I am not mistaken, created the part in Paris, played it like a sophisticated—that is rather a mild term—woman of the world but Kathi Schratt was the married ingénue that Sardou had in mind.

Another famous Thalia actress was Marie Geistinger of marvelous versatility, her repertoire ranging from Lady Macbeth to *La Fille de Madame Angot.* Still another was Josie Gallmeyer, a sort of German May Irwin, and the idol of Vienna. On one occasion while appearing in Vienna in "Fatinitza," Madame Gallmeyer gave such offense to the Empress who was seated in her box that her manager deemed it prudent for her to retire for a time, and accordingly she went to Berlin whither her great reputation had already preceded her. She was greeted by an enormous audience that was cold and critical, and in despair at her inability to rouse them, she skipped down the stage singing an improvised couplet beginning "Du bist vurrückt, mein Kind, etc.," which, freely translated is "You are a fool, my child, to go to Berlin; where the cranks are you do not belong." These lines were echoed far and near and it is assumed to this day that they were original with the part.

Jennie Stubel was the star of the operettas and it was her sister who was the companion of the Austrian archduke when he renounced the privileges of his rank and disappeared under the name of John Orth.

But the actor whom I came to know the best and whose work made the deepest impression on me was Ludwig Barnay, a Hungarian of splendid appearance and by far the greatest Mark Antony that I have ever seen. Of his performance of this rôle I shall have something to say in a later chapter.

Another player whom I shall never forget was the comedian Gustav Adolphi who later graduated to the American stage and made a great hit as the tulip-vendor in *The Merry War*. Adolphi had been an enormous favorite and money-maker in Europe, but his passion for gambling proved his ruin. The last I heard of him he was peddling maps for a living.

Many customs that seemed strange to me prevailed in the German Theatre. The Thalia's location was excellent for it was next door to the Atlantic Garden and it is a well known fact that no German playhouse can exist in New York that is not within convenient distance of a first-class beer saloon. A clause in its lease stipulated that no English word should be spoken on its stage. Strict rules regulated rehearsal as well as performance, and during the former the director was not allowed to give orders or suggestions to any of the principals except in a whisper while in the presence of the chorus. A lapse of five years in the action of the play compelled every actor to make up his face anew, then show himself to the stage manager before appearing on the scene. The difference between the German stage and our own is indicated by the fact that the official known here as the call-boy is the librarian of a German theatre.

The proximity of a beer garden or saloon is essential

to success because the Teutonic theatregoer does not visit such a resort for the purpose of getting drunk but to "philosophieren" with his friends over the play they have witnessed. For while the American is satisfied if he has been entertained by a performance, the German demands also something to take away with him for future mental digestion. Amberg knew well what he was doing when he built what is now the Irving Place Theatre within half a block of Lüchow's Restaurant and right round the corner from the office of the open-handed William Steinway.

My duties as a Thalia press-agent were neither difficult nor onerous, for, as very few of the critics understood German, they were quite ready to accept my assurances that everything on the stage was as it should be, and there were even those who saved themselves trouble by printing the notices that I wrote for them. Within the walls of the theatre I acquired distinct vogue as a person of supreme importance, for while actors and others were excluded I could always gain admittance to the managerial offices, even when such delicate transactions as borrowing more money from the Fleischmanns were in progress. But I was admitted, not because I was important, but because I did not understand German, and was therefore regarded as worthy of no more consideration than the house cat.

On first nights it was my custom to visit the *avant-scène* during the performance and make my way to the property room where the master minds of the stage were always assembled anxiously awaiting news from the front. How well do I remember that vast stage,

one hundred and twenty feet in depth, with the players awaiting their cues in the wings, silent under the menacing eyes of Conried; the prompter, looking out from her hood in the centre; a tray of gilded wooden goblets lying ready for use; the wardroom hung with costumes by Sophie Klein and, most vividly of all, the property room. Beneath the stage was a great chamber to which the musicians were wont to retire for their evening game of poker, and Barnay, who understood English, was greatly flattered once when his performance of King Lear was punctuated by exclamations of "That's good!" that came from some mysterious source.

The property room was filled with furniture and accoutrements designed to represent every age and clime from the terrible fittings used in the modern German play, to the stands of arms employed in *Coriolanus*. My reception at the hands of the master minds of the *avant-scène* was always cordially respectful, for I was regarded as the connecting link between their little world and that of the powerful American press. Seated on great Caesar's bier and refreshing myself from a frothy tankard, I would respond to the queries put to me through an interpreter.

"Is the *Herald* there in its seats?"

"Yes, the *Herald* is there."

"Will it bring a notice?"

"Yes, it will bring a notice."

General expression of relief and satisfaction. Then from the master carpenter: "How is the bridge in the first act?"

"The bridge is grand."

Then from the master scene-painter:

"Does the palace interior in the second act look well?"

"Its imposing appearance has created a positive furor."

I will add that after each assurance the interrogator would advance and solemnly shake hands.

Sonnenthal's engagement, one of the most prosperous in the annals of the local German stage, was accomplished after my time in the following fashion. The Fleischmann group had sunk a hundred and twenty thousand dollars in the Thalia venture and refused to put up any more money, and the season had closed with a benefit for Carl Herrmann who was justly popular with the company, and the proceeds of which, together with a sum that he raised by pawning his watch, were used by him to pay off the chorus and send them back to Europe.

This act helped to sustain the excellent reputation that the Thalia management had always enjoyed among German players, and now Herrmann and Conried determined to turn this reputation to good account.

There remained to them a contract with Sonnenthal, one of the greatest of German favorites, whereby that actor agreed to come to America provided a large sum were paid him in advance. Conried proceeded to Vienna and for a few days drove about the principal thoroughfares attended by a small black boy, thus creating the illusion of great American opulence. Then he called on Sonnenthal and asked him if he were willing to undertake an American tour.

"Certainly," he replied, "provided I receive the money named in our contract."

"That will be all right," said Conried cheerfully, and when he returned to New York he and his partners evolved a scheme that they carried to success. They notified their patrons of the forthcoming tour and told them that as the season in New York was to be limited to a fortnight, they had decided to put the seats on sale in advance. So eager were the patrons to see this great actor that they bought enough tickets to secure Sonnenthal's presence and the profits of the enterprise ran well up into the thousands, and enabled Conried to go into the business of renting steamer chairs on the ocean liners.

America owes much to the German stage for many excellent plays and operettas as well as for many sterling actors. Among these latter may be named Madame Janauschek who starred here for several years; Leo Dietrichstein, who holds a high place in the profession as an actor and adapter of plays; Hubert Wilkie and that fine artist, Albert Bruning. Madame Cottrelly, whom American soubrettes may study to advantage, was the director of the Thalia Theatre prior to the Herrmann reign.

CHAPTER XI

MY interest in the various local foreign communities began when I was practicing French in the boarding-house and was developed during my two seasons at the Thalia Theatre. I came to know various members of the Swiss colony, for the most part families of excellent standing and of Genevese nativity. From them I learned of the existence in the city of a personage whom I have never seen mentioned in print. This was a natural son of Louis Napoleon, born shortly after his father, who had lived here in West Ninth Street, and also in Hoboken, returned to France. I never met the son myself but I knew many Swiss and French who knew him and could speak authoritatively of his origin. I have even seen his photograph in a family album. The Emperor always took care of him and he had a berth in the French Consulate until the fall of the Napoleonic dynasty in 1870. Another foreigner whom I have often seen in Fleischmann's Café was Count Bellegarde, of remarkable antecedents. He had at one time held the rank of Cardinal, though he had never been an ordained priest. Some of my informants thought he was a regularly chosen member of the College, but an exiled Austrian noble assured me that he had been the Austrian Nuncio with the rank of Cardinal. The story went that he had been disgraced because of entering into a mock

marriage with a lady of high position, his servant, arrayed as a priest, performing the ceremony. In his early years he had served in the Austrian army and his brother filled the Court position of First Adjutant to the Emperor. When he first came to New York he found employment in a gambling house, but later the Emperor allowed him fifty dollars a week from his privy purse, and he was to be seen almost daily in Fleischmann's Café.

Another noble exile of those days was Lord Drummond, of the family of the Earl of Perth, who had been driven from his home because of his marriage to the nursery governess and who supported himself by pot-hunting on the south shore of Long Island. He moved to New York and lived there in straitened circumstances for some years. His family relented and offered to restore him to all that he had lost provided that he would give up his wife, but this he steadfastly refused to do. An old friend of mine who had known his grandfather used to supply him with clothes and finally procured him a position as ticket-puncher on the elevated road. There he remained until attacked by pneumonia, which carried him off.

Baron de Grimm, whom I knew intimately, had a very unusual history. His father had been the tutor of Alexander III of Russia, and de Grimm himself had been born in the Winter Palace and spent his whole boyhood there as a sort of running mate to the Czarewitch and his younger brothers. Although vain in certain other respects, he attached but little importance to this early experience, and I had known him for more than a year

before a chance question on my part loosened his tongue. Once in his own house I asked him if he had ever seen the Czar of Russia, to which he replied nonchalantly: "I slept in the same room with him for two years."

He told me much about life at the Russian Court and the system of education pursued by his father. The centre of this system was the young Czarewitch and the classes were so arranged—several young noblemen shared his studies—that he was always placed in close contact with the brightest and most stimulating of his companions. His room-mate was changed at regular intervals in order that no one of his playmates should acquire any great influence over him.

From de Grimm I gained an idea of the isolation of an autocrat and the atmosphere of dread, suspicion and uncertainty that surrounds an autocratic court. When the Czar Alexander II sent his son to the Riviera for the sake of his health, he received from the young man's attendants only vague reports in regard to his condition although couriers arrived daily with letters. On one occasion the soldier who brought the post-bag was ushered into the presence of the Czar himself, and the latter, after a hasty glance at his correspondence, exclaimed: "There is no letter from my son and it is some days since I have heard from him!"

"But, Sire," exclaimed the soldier, "he is no longer able to write!"

"My God! My God!" exclaimed the sovereign of all the Russias. "Will nobody ever tell me anything?" And it may be remembered that Nicholas II uttered the same despairing cry when the news of the January mas-

sacre, which had been sedulously kept from him by his courtiers, finally reached his ears.

Attached to the Court circle at St. Petersburg in de Grimm's time was a young prince who was more than suspected of revolutionary ideas. He disappeared quite suddenly and his friends thought it inexpedient to inquire as to his whereabouts. One day Madame de Grimm, according to her son's story, was sitting with a group of ladies in the private apartment of the Empress when a court functionary arrived to say that he had sent a locksmith to repair a broken lock, and soon after a young man in workman's blouse entered and at once set about his work, with his back turned to the company. Something familiar in his appearance caused Madame de Grimm to cross the room and obtain a view of his face, which she recognized at once as that of the young prince. Thus disguised he had made his way into the very heart of the Winter Palace, aided by Heaven alone knows what accomplices. I asked de Grimm if his mother told any one of what she had seen and he made answer that she deemed it safer to say nothing about it. She never even told her husband until after they had left Russia.

Captain Maximoff was well known to Russians of his day as a journalist and war-correspondent and the author of certain books on social questions. From his intimate friend, Count Tolstoi, he had derived many ideas regarding the dignity of manual labor which he proceeded to put into practice when he arrived in New York. This was in 1892 when the Russian fleet arrived, bringing two men of distinction as guests of the Admiral.

One of these was Captain Maximoff and the other a cousin of the Czar's. I met the Captain soon after his arrival and he told me that he would do no more writing. *"Je suis plein de littérature, jusque là,"* he said, indicating the bridge of his nose. His friends here tried to find some occupation for him that would befit his notions of dignity and at last Gribayedoff obtained for him the post of *chargé d'affaires* in the *Herald* office, by which I mean that he had charge of the reception room and took the cards of visitors to members of the staff. In so doing he often served J. P. Jackson with whom he had campaigned in the Balkans. But Maximoff was a man who required but little sleep, and as his hours of duty were few he looked about him for some work that would save him from the ennui of leisure. Then he appeared in Broadway, clad as usual in his frock coat and carrying a bundle of *Evening Telegrams* under his arm which he tried to vend to the passers-by. But the newsboys, whom he had expected would hail him as a comrade, regarded him as a rival and twitched the papers from under his arm with cries of derision and eventually drove him out of the business.

Soon after this we heard that he had purchased a fruit-stand on the northwest corner of Third Avenue and Thirty-sixth Street and "Grib" and I visited him there one Sunday afternoon. He was feeding a horse with his bananas, and an Irishman was vainly trying to buy some apples for his children. But the Captain paid but scant heed to the would-be customer. "Go away!" he said. "Can't you see that I am feeding this poor animal?"

He welcomed us cordially, however, as we were friends, not customers, and led us into the corner saloon with hospitable intent. "Your friend is a gentleman, but he don't know the ways of New York, and he'll drop his pants on that apple-stand. The other day he wanted me to change what he said was money though it's not the kind that passes here. It looked like it was torn off a tea-chest." Thus spake the bartender to me confidentially.

His fruit business having failed he leased from the manager of a Jewish theatre a portion of the sidewalk a few yards from the playhouse, entirely ignoring the fact that the manager had no sort of rights in the matter. Here he set up a small stand for the sale of candy, only to find himself in competition with another vendor to whom the manager had leased the privilege of selling like delicacies inside the lobby of his house.

When the Boer War broke out the Captain organized the Maximoff Legion to serve with the Boers and was killed. I honor his memory as that of a Socialist who conscientiously lived up to his principles.

A Pacifist of a very different stripe from those who flourished during the late war was Vassili Verestchagin, whom I knew slightly when he came to New York to exhibit his pictures. I remember that we were both admitted with due ceremonial to the *Schlaraffia* at the same meeting and I believe that we were at that time the only members of the society who were not of German birth. Verestchagin had served his country as a naval officer in three or four wars and had acquired such a horror of the bloody business that he turned

his attention to painting scenes calculated to inspire a like horror in others. A very sincere and very brave man, he did not permit his distaste for war to turn him into a conscientious objector, but continued in the service of his country in the struggle between her and Japan and perished in the sinking of the flagship *Petropavlovsk*.

But by far the most interesting as well as the most sensationally famous of New York's foreign colony was Helena Schewitsch, born Fräulein von Dönniges, which name she exchanged quite early in life for that of Princess Racowitza. Among all the women whom I have known none has led a life so crowded with incident, drama and experience as had this one. Louis Napoleon rose from Hoboken to the Tuileries. Madame Racowitza had been in her early childhood the playmate of another Louis, that mad King of Bavaria, and when I knew her she had reached Hoboken in her long journey toward her own tragic end.

Born of a Jewish mother and a father who claimed descent from the ancient Vikings, she was wont to attribute to the latter the romanticism and lack of self-restraint that dominated her career. Brought up in the intellectual society of Munich, Fräulein von Dönniges had opportunities for knowing distinguished and noble men and women such as seldom fall to the lot of a young girl in any capital. As she grew in years she accompanied her father to the different European courts to which he was accredited by his sovereign and where she attracted much attention because of her wit and beauty. The constant flattery that she received, com-

bined with the qualities already named, gave her a self-esteem and passion for publicity to which are due many of the eccentricities and amorous adventures with which her history is punctuated. A quiet domestic life had no charm for her. She was happy only when public attention was turned toward her, no matter for what cause.

She certainly followed trails then rarely trodden by young women of her birth. At a time when German custom frowned upon any attempt on the part of woman to escape from the narrow limits of church, kitchen and nursery she was insistent in her clamor for that "equality of the sexes" that we hear so much about now. An uncompromising advocate of the single standard of morality for both men and women she was neither afraid nor ashamed to practice what she preached.

She was still very young when she fell in love with Ferdinand Lassalle, and her own writings leave us in no doubt regarding the nature of her relations with him. Her lover was considered one of the most brilliant men of his time and was the virtual founder of the German Socialist Party. The dream of his followers, who were numerous and intensely devoted to him as well as to his cause, was to see him installed as the President of the German Republic with the golden-haired Helena at his side. Her parents wished her to break off her intimacy with the Socialist leader and marry the Wallachian Prince Racowitza and it was the jealous rivalry between the suitors that led to the duel in which Lassalle was killed.

As the heroine of a duel that had robbed her of her lover and Central Europe of one of its most famous men,

Miss Ada Lewis, a Pretty, Young Actress Who Chose Character Instead of Ingenue Roles

Helena von Schevitsch, of Remarkable History

Fräulein von Dönniges enjoyed a degree of publicity that would have satisfied the cravings of the most *exigeante* of *poseuses*. It was the most sensational and widely discussed affair of honor of its time and the belief was general that to seek further *réclame* would result only in a mortifying anti-climax. But these prophets failed to reckon with either the resource or the capacity for creating publicity of this young woman. Helena did the one thing likely to intensify the feelings of interest and curiosity with which the public regarded her. Within six months she married the slayer of her lover.

This marriage marked the high water of her renown and established a record that not even the most crafty self-advertiser has ever passed. The death of her husband a few months later fanned the dying embers of popular interest into a brief flame and then came silence, always distasteful to her. More than one man of artistic distinction became her lover—she had good taste in such affairs—and for a time she enjoyed a *succès d'estime* on the stage and as the author of novels and books which like *My Relations with Lassalle,* dealt largely with her own wayward career. She came to America as the wife of a well born Russian named Serge Schewitsch and it was here that I knew them both. She must have been over forty years of age at this time and her face still bore traces of former beauty. She had a head of splendid golden hair which gained for her the nickname of the "Red Countess" and she was certainly a woman of wit, intelligence and rare personal charm—or at least so she appeared to me.

Her husband, who had been exiled from Russia because of his revolutionary activities, wrote for the *World* and some of the papers printed in foreign tongues and became the editor of the *Volkszeitung,* but I was informed by more than one of his countrymen, among whom I had quite an acquaintance, that he was really the leader of the local group of Nihilists whose activities were directed against the Czar's government. The two lived quietly and consorted only with the members of the various foreign colonies. I recall a supper given by Barnay to which I was the only American invited and at which Madame Schewitsch presided with the grace of one to the manner born, conversing with great animation and fluency in at least four languages.

I am sure that very few New Yorkers were aware of the presence in the town of such a celebrity, and Madame Schewitsch courted no publicity in the American press. But she was a born *intrigante* and the cabals of the Thalia's *avant-scène* claimed much of her attention. She became a violent partisan—I forget on which side—in the rivalry between Gallmeyer and Geistinger, and a firm supporter of Barnay in his revolt against Conried. The tragedian was wont to give expression to his feelings by replying to a casual inquiry as to his health: "I am very well to-day, thank you; I have not seen my manager for twenty-four hours." When asked how long he expected to remain in America he would reply with a pleasant smile: "Twenty-three days, thirteen hours and fourteen minutes," and then look at his watch as if to make sure that he had estimated correctly.

I have written of Madame Schewitsch as I knew her.

Her history has been more fully related in George Meredith's *Tragic Comedians*, and in Israel Zangwill's *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, and also in her own printed works.

Very early one morning in the autumn of 1897, I inquired of a small newsboy, from whom I had purchased a paper, if he obtained his stock in trade from the American News Company, to which he made answer: "Naw, I gits 'em offa Try Tollar."

"And who may Dry Dollar be?" I asked.

"He's a big lad wot buys for us little kids," he answered and thus I heard for the first time of the man who was even then beginning to build up the great personal following that made him a political power on the East Side in later years. The newsboy further explained that this man, afterward known as "Big Tim Sullivan," owed his nickname to the fact that he never drank anything and kept his dollars dry, but Sullivan himself informed me many years later, while seated in his saloon in Centre Street, that although he never tasted liquor, he acquired the name when, as a very small boy, he found a beer stamp on the sidewalk and brought it to his mother saying, "Here's a dry dollar I've found."

Sullivan had a thorough knowledge of the region in which he lived, then largely populated by the Irish and Germans. He was a born leader who studied the needs or rather the wishes of his following and tried to give them what they most desired. He remained a politician to the last, though as years went on he became interested in theatrical and gambling ventures, and was the acknowledged head of the all-powerful Sullivan Clan.

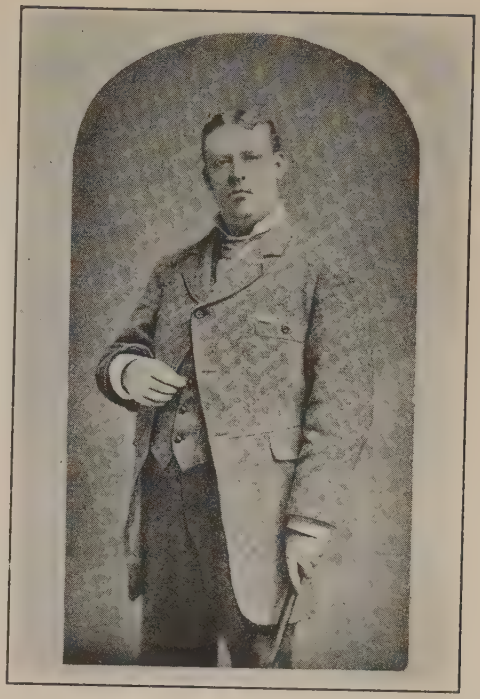
This included a cousin called "Little Tim Sullivan," a half-brother named Larry Mulligan, and another cousin, Florence Sullivan, who kept a saloon on Chatham Square. Florence was one of the few real municipal reformers I have known and he reformed his own bailiwick by methods which were at once simple and effective. He had an intense hatred, common enough among the Irish, for the miserable men who subsisted on the earnings of depraved women, and whenever he met one of these creatures within the limits of his district, he hit him in the face, the result being that in the course of time he had one of the cleanest visiting lists in New York.

Most of the reformers whom I have known have directed their energies toward some region remote from their own, but Florence never sought to reform either Fifth Avenue or Brooklyn. He confined his beneficent energies to the quarter in which he lived.

Another East Side politician whom I came to know very well was a Hungarian Jew called "Silver Dollar Smith," who had imbedded a thousand silver dollars with a fifty-dollar gold piece in the centre, in the cement floor of his Essex Street saloon, and many were the east side nails worn out in trying to extract them. Smith told me that in the three days that followed the completion of this scheme of decoration he took in over his bar more than three times its total cost from persons who "wanted to see how this fool had wasted his money."

My acquaintance with Smith began at the annual picnic of the John J. O'Brien Association of the Eighth Assembly District, which I reported for the *Herald*. As

"Silver Dollar Smith," a Well-known East-side Politician



Billy Gray, Team-mate of Johnny Wild in the Harrigan and Hart Company

the *Herald* had been diligently "pounding" Smith and his political associates as "eye-gougers and thugs"—neither of which epithets Smith deserved—I was a little in doubt as to how I would be received. It was a picnic of the old-fashioned political kind, attended only by men, and nobody in the district who looked for further favors dared refuse purchasing a ticket. After a parade through the region the company embarked on a steamboat and I modestly followed, handing in my ticket with the fatal word *Herald* upon it. The boat had no sooner started than faro-tables, poker tables, roulette wheels and other portable appurtenances of the goddess of Chance sprang up everywhere and in such numbers that I wondered if there were any persons left on board to try their luck.

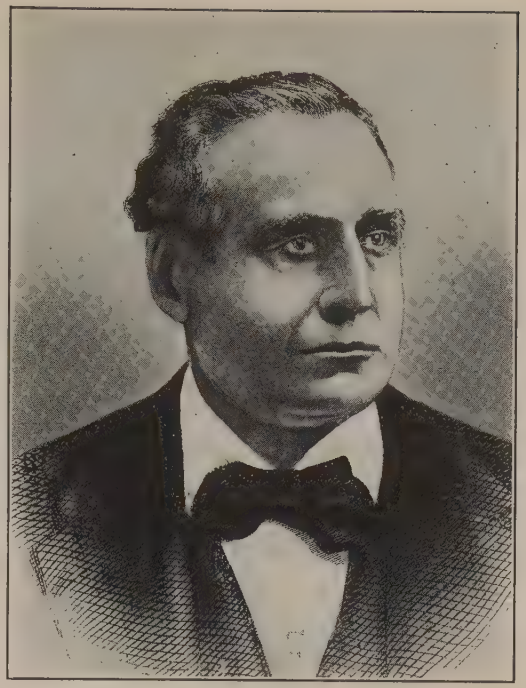
The ticket teller had shrewdly made note of my appearance and by his identification Smith sought me out with a friendly welcome and led me to a stateroom reserved for distinguished guests and adorned with many bottles of champagne. The company landed at Whitestone after a voyage which had been noteworthy because of the complete absence of fighting and even disputes over the gambling tables and that, too, despite the fact that there was a free bar for the distribution of beer and spirits to the thirsty. The crowd was too tough to permit any brawls and they were all anxious to preserve the good reputation of the John J. O'Brien Association as a peaceful body.

After the publication of my report, the *Herald* for some reason ceased to attack Smith and despite my denials he insisted upon it that my influence had secured

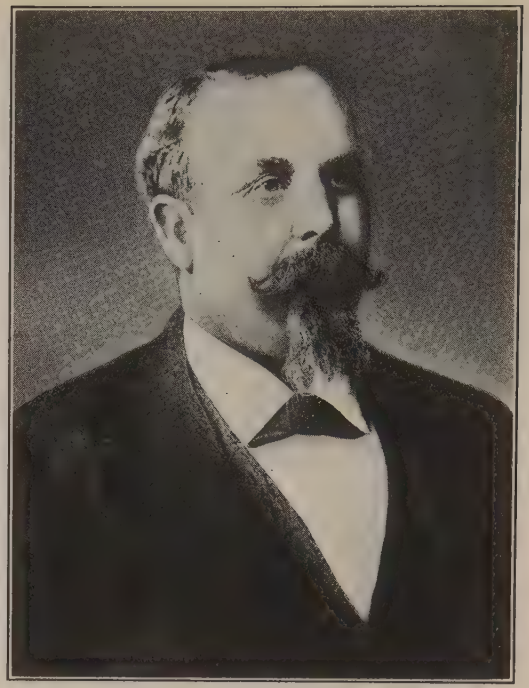
him this immunity and he was grateful to me and I may say, a good friend of mine from that time on. Some years later I was an honored guest at the wedding of his daughter in an uptown hall, a ceremony that was witnessed by an extraordinary gathering that ranged in social status from Police Inspectors down to the deaf and dumb bootblack of the Essex Market Court. John Y. McKane came over from Coney Island for the occasion, and a guest of even greater importance than himself was a woman who kept a house of ill-fame and was a distinct power in East Side politics. The bride was a modest and attractive girl of pleasing manners. She told me that her father had a roof-garden on top of his house built especially for her to play in and that she had been carefully kept off the streets from her earliest childhood.

Through Smith I came to know something of East Side politics and one or two of its politicians, one of whom was Barney Rourke, whose dingy saloon on a narrow by-street was famous as the scene of a meeting marked by red letters on the annals of the district.

Rourke divided the leadership with "Silver Dollar" and once, when there was misunderstanding between them and the administration on some political matter, he flatly refused to go to the White House to settle it and it became necessary for the mountain to come to Mahomet. President Arthur journeyed unostentatiously to New York and presented himself one Sunday morning at the door of the dingy saloon, where he was received by Rourke and conducted to a little back room



Harry Hill, Proprietor of the Famous Dance Hall of That Name



John Y. McKane, the Czar of Coney Island

in which many political disputes had in previous years been settled. It was here that certain matters relating to the governorship were amicably discussed and an agreement reached.

The men whom I have described owed their influence to their ability to secure the largest possible number of labor tickets for their constituents, and as each one of these tickets entitled its holder to a job on some municipal work its possession was a matter of supreme importance to those who earned their bread by the sweat of their brow.

Rourke was a taciturn little Irishman who held his following in the hollow of his hand. It is related of him that at the close of a hotly-contested election, one of his lieutenants rushed in to inform him that he had carried his district by every vote but one.

"What I want to know," retorted Rourke vehemently, "is the name of the wan sucker that voted agin us!"

It was toward the close of the first Cleveland administration that I went down to Coney Island, probably for no sane purpose, and did some newspaper work there. I was attracted by the picturesque aspects of that resort, for John Y. McKane was then at the height of his power and a revolt against the Cleveland administration seemed likely in the near future. The President was not popular with those professional politicians who looked only to a division of the spoils, and his championship of new Civil Service rules was a menace to their power.

Coney Island was at this time very different from what it is to-day. It had emerged from the roughness

of the Norton's Point dominion and was a comparatively well-ordered breathing-spot, lighted chiefly by naphtha gas.

McKane was an Irishman with a skill in political matters characteristic of his race. He had contrived to secure for himself and his followers every one of the important political offices that the Island government afforded, and in so doing had made himself a ruler of despotic power. His ukase "get off the island!" had to be obeyed and hardy indeed was the citizen who dared defy him. I must say that his rule was, on the whole, mild and just and there was no question as to the loyalty and devotion of his subjects.

Annie Reilly, a highly gifted artist, according to Island standards, attracted the favorable eye of Gallagher, the local plumber, while she was singing in one of the beach pavilions. Moved to exasperation by a long delay in the work of re-plumbing the building that served as his headquarters, McKane learned, in response to inquiry, of the plumber's infatuation. Summoning one of his henchmen, he exclaimed, "Tell Annie Reilly to get off the Island till Gallagher's finished the plumbing," and from this sentence there was no appeal. Gallagher fell upon his job, tooth and nail, and three or four days later Miss Reilly resumed her artistic activities in the presence of an enthusiastic, welcoming audience.

I recall another ripple in the current of musical life in which McKane again assumed the rôle of Solomon. Miss Lottie Reeves, a favorite songstress, having lost two of her front teeth through contact with her husband's fist, replaced them with wads of chewing-gum,

but further family jars brought the case into the local police-court. McKane listened gravely while Miss Reeves described the domestic affray and explained what she would have done to her mate if it hadn't been that she was a perfect lady. The chewing-gum teeth melted when she tried to eat an ear of hot corn, leaving an aperture through which her high notes came haltingly and without their accustomed melody. McKane's verdict was that the husband should buy her a new and entirely satisfactory set of teeth and the now re-united pair departed amicably.

Under McKane's rule the Island drew to itself a large number of broken-down gamblers, crooks and dive-keepers and these found sanctuary there so long as they did not transact any nefarious business within the limits of McKane's bailiwick. It was a picturesque colony that these way-worn sinners formed, one that remained there winter as well as summer and it was a common saying that any old-timer who joined this colony went out feet first. On one thing at least the colony prided itself and that was the fact that Potter's Field had never claimed even the poorest of its members. "The Island buries its own dead" was a phrase that went the rounds when the word was passed that some old thief or gambler had "cashed in."

More than one notorious career came to an end within sound of the Coney Island waves. There was Kate Leary who dug her husband Red Leary out of Ludlow Street jail and was in consequence a nine days' heroine in the town. Some years after this exploit, her husband died and she came down to Coney Island and

opened a small saloon, hoping to obtain the patronage of the gang with which Red had operated. As years went on she grew poorer and poorer and when her mind began to weaken the local authorities took notice of her condition and would have sent her to Blackwell's Island had it not been for the friendly offices of an old-time pickpocket and his wife who came forward and offered to care for her during the remainder of her days. This worthy pair dwelt in a cabin remote from the merry end of the Island and here, a few weeks later, while the wind was howling dismally over the marshes, the word went forth from that lonely habitation that Kate Leary had "cashed in."

Another career that came to an end on that dreary marsh-land was that of one of the Worrell sisters, whom I remember as the managers of a theatre on Broadway, with the family name in gas-jets over the entrance. One of the sisters married George S. Knight, a well-known actor, but this one took to evil courses, drifted down to the Island, and one night, being absolutely homeless, wandered out to the marshes and, while trying to light a cigarette, set fire to the dry sea grass and was burned to death.

A man of a certain eminence in the criminal world who kept a bar-room on the Island under McKane's benign rule was Mr. Abe Coakley, who had had a part in the plundering of the Manhattan Bank. This gigantic robbery ranks in criminal circles as does the "Charge of the Light Brigade," in the annals of the British Army. Several of the leading experts among safe-crackers took part in this colossal job and it is said that nearly three

years were spent in preparation. Offices were hired that commanded a view of the interior of the bank and it was through this means that the robbers discovered that the janitor had the combination of the safe. Mr. Coakley was taken into the plot because he bore a strong resemblance to this janitor and when the latter was seized on Saturday night, securely tied and the secret of the combination learned from him, Mr. Coakley was arrayed in his clothes and told to play the janitor's part on Sunday morning. Early on that day he appeared with his duster inside the bank where all passers-by could see him through the plate-glass windows and there he remained, performing all the ordinary duties of the man whom he had replaced. Meanwhile the marauders were at work in the bank vaults, and early on Monday morning they forced open the last door and took out money and securities of enormous value. Nearly all of the last named were not negotiable but there were enough of the others to make the venture profitable for all concerned. A quarter of a century later a number of these securities that were not negotiable were placed on the market by a gentleman living at the Waldorf.

An episode relating to this robbery which I learned from one of the greatest criminal authorities in America is worth relating. A great many persons have declared that Professor Moriarty, of Sherlock Holmes fame, who engineered many of the biggest jobs in London and was yet personally unknown to the police, was an impossible character. Nevertheless he had a prototype in New York in the person of Jimmy Hope, the moving spirit of the Manhattan Bank robbery. Soon after this affair, while

Captain Byrnes was moving heaven and earth to put his hands on this criminal whom he had never seen, Hope was standing on a street corner in conversation with a pal. "There comes the captain of the precinct," warned the latter.

"He don't know me. Watch me get a light for my cigar." And forthwith the Moriarty of his day accosted the official who was then hunting everywhere for him.

I heard of Coakley a few years ago and he was then picking up a living in an odd fashion. He was then a very old man and the possessor of a long gray beard, a form of hirsute adornment that seldom fails to inspire confidence in urban as well as in bucolic minds, and this beard had become a source of precarious income to the aged crook. He worked with certain experts in green goods and gold bricks and when a prospective victim—termed in the lexicon of the craft a "come-on"—was nearly ripe for plucking the expert who had him in tow would suddenly explain: "Before we go any further in this deal I want you to meet my dear old father, as fine an old gentleman as ever walked the streets."

And, having been dragged from his lurking place and duly presented, the venerable man would lay a trembling hand on the stranger's shoulder and address him in a voice whose sincerity exactly matched his whiskers: "I'm glad to meet you, my boy, very glad indeed to meet any friend of my son's. This is an awful wicked city but my son Joe will take good care of you. Stay by him and you'll be all right. God bless you, my boy."

What "come-on" could withstand such an appeal?

A matter that interested me quite seriously in Coney

Island was the disposition of the western end of the Island, consisting of a hundred and thirty-five acres and now known as Sea Gate. So long as the McKane crowd controlled the property no one would touch it, but finally they cut it off from the town of Gravesend and offered it for sale for two hundred thousand dollars. I tried to interest one or two moneyed men in the venture but they wagged their heads ominously and said that it was so near New York that if there were anything in it, somebody would have done something with it already. The value of Sea Gate lots at the present day is, I believe, a matter of record.

In my mind, however, this wild stretch of beach and sand dunes was singularly attractive. The only houses on it were the two abandoned structures at the western end, one the old Norton's Point Hotel, and the other the house in which Tweed lay hidden after his escape from prison. The waves dashed up close to the steps of the old hostelry and the only living creatures to be seen about were the sea gulls and a few rabbits.

McKane was an efficient Chief of Police. With a very small force he handled the great Sunday crowds at the Island, which always contained an unruly element, so well that I never saw a serious affray there during the days of his rule. As I have already indicated he governed his own bailiwick with unquestioned authority and at the same time enjoyed the fealty of his subjects to an extraordinary degree.

There was one man, however, who rebelled against his authority, a grim and sandy old bathing-house-keeper named Peter Tilyou, a native of Gravesend and the

founder of the dynasty still powerful at the resort. Tilyou was in a chronic state of rebellion against the Island's autocrat and when McKane was sentenced to Sing Sing for defying a Supreme Court injunction, the old man hovered about him as he was conveyed by officers from his home to the place of his incarceration and bobbed up at various points to shake a triumphant fist in the face of his fallen foe.

I may add that during his prison term, McKane was not only a model of good behavior, but also rendered efficient service to the State by means of his skill as a carpenter and builder. Evidences of his proficiency in those crafts may still be seen there.

A man whom I knew at this time and whose fame at the height of his career was world-wide, was a specialist in the very highest sense of the word in a very unusual calling. Specialists there are whose knowledge beyond the limits of their own craft is not extensive but it seemed to me that this man, an absolute genius in his own line, knew nothing else, although he had enjoyed extraordinary advantages in the way of travel.

His name was Blondin and there are still living many who remember the excitement caused in the Sixties when he walked across Niagara Falls on a tight rope, pausing midway in his course to cook and eat an omelette, and even offering to take the Prince of Wales, who had gazed in wonder at his achievement, from Canada to this country on his back.

Blondin came of a family of strolling mountebanks and was accustomed, from his infancy, to see his father and his sister perform feats of daring and agility that

excited the wonder of every one who witnessed them in the villages of central Europe. As the custom was then, the tight rope on which they performed was stretched from the ground to a church steeple and one day, when Blondin was but four years of age, he saw his sister dart nimbly up the rope and was seized with a sudden fear for her safety. Picking up his father's cane, he followed her up the rope and the amazement of the family was greater than that of the villagers, for he had never attempted the feat before. They saw at once that he was a born tight rope walker and declared that he should follow that calling.

He did follow it in every part of the world and never had an accident of any kind. He was the only performer of his kind that I have ever seen whom I could watch without fear of disaster, yet outside of this he knew nothing at all. His travels and experiences in far off lands had left no impression on his mind and although he had lived in England nearly twenty years, he could not speak a single word of English. On terra firma he impressed me as singularly dull, but the moment he put his foot on the rope he took on an air of dignity that could not fail to impress the beholder. He had a trick of pretending to slip in the midst of his journey and it never failed to elicit from the watching crowd a great roar of apprehensive groans. More than once I have seen women fall fainting at this moment.

CHAPTER XII

IN illustration of the fact that my hindsight has, like that of most men, always been clearer than my foresight, I recall a day in the early Seventies when an idle stroll on Broadway yielded two episodes whose full significance I did not understand until many years later. Desirous of refreshment I descended into a beer saloon close to where the Broadway Central Hotel now stands and there beheld a few survivors of the old "Pfaff crowd," the bohemians of the Fifties and Sixties. They were seated around a table directly under the sidewalk and one of them was Charles L. Gaylor, one of the early American dramatists whose face I readily recalled when I came to know him in a later decade. A little further in my walk I paused to watch the evolutions of a skillful rider of one of the heavy wooden velocipedes that preceded the modern bicycle. Long afterward I learned that the rider of the velocipede was Gus Frohman of the now famous theatrical brotherhood, and that the picture that hung on the wall of Pfaff's cellar was that of one of the earliest bohemians, Georges Clemenceau. Thus it happened that within the brief space of half an hour I had seen the last of a passing order and the beginnings of a new and powerful dynasty.

The career of the Frohmans and the power of the

theatrical syndicate, with which they were associated, have proved fruitful of much comment but to this day I have not been able to decide whether they have been a curse or a blessing. And I may say the same of nearly all the great commercial trusts and the captains of industry who control them. In dealing with this subject we must remember that the close of the Eighties found the business of theatricals still regarded by men of means as an uncertain, not to say dangerous proposition.

An actor who made an engagement had to consider not only the play and his own part but also the chances of success, for fly-by-night managers would organize a company on the most slender capital and if successful enjoy a prosperous season or if not, would not hesitate to abandon their people in some remote town and hurry back to New York where they would have no difficulty in getting actors for their next enterprise. Most of the business of engaging companies, ordering printing and arranging routes was carried on along the sidewalks of Union Square or in contiguous saloons. A manager was not said to have an office but a "hang-out," where he transacted his business. These unfortunate conditions supplied the humorists with abundant material and Fred Opper was very happy in his line of work. A picture of his that I recall represents a group of actors discussing the relative degrees of safety of a single and double track road. One of them declared that the double track road was more unsafe than the other, because as you were stepping off one track to avoid an approaching train, you were liable to be run over by another coming from the opposite direction.

The laws affecting dramatic copyright were far from satisfactory in those days and gave ample opportunity to the unscrupulous. It was to defeat the work of the play-pirates that a young Louisville lawyer named Marc Klaw was employed by the Mallorys, who were frequent sufferers from those gentry. In chasing down these swindlers, Mr. Klaw was eminently successful, as he has been later as a syndicate manager. Another young man whose peculiar gifts were developed in the war between Klaw and the pirates, was one Teddy Byron, known on the Rialto as the "toy tragedian." Byron had astounding ability in the now forgotten craft of "memorising" a drama, by which process, according to the lax code of his day, it became the property of him who stole it. He could sit through one performance of *The Two Orphans* and leave the theatre with every line of dialogue and every bit of "business" firmly engraved on his memory. But the attachés of the various houses were always on the look-out for him and many a play was interrupted by the uproar in the gallery as the ushers dragged Teddy from his seat and cast him into outer darkness.

That from the very beginning the Frohmans aimed to gain control of many theatrical enterprises is not to be doubted; nor were they deterred by the Nemesis that had overtaken others of similar ambition. Ethelbert A. Marshall had long since died in poverty, as stage doorkeeper at a Philadelphia playhouse, and the entrance of the Frohmans was coincident with the decline of J. H. Haverly, who had almost succeeded in carrying out his idea of owning forty theatres scattered about the coun-

try and as many traveling companies to fill them. In New York he controlled the Fifth Avenue Theatre, the Fourteenth Street and others and was also the manager of a minstrel company and the director of the tour of Mapleson's Grand Opera Company. The *Pinafore* craze led him to organize a juvenile company in which Annie Russell, Willie Collier and Julia Marlowe were all enrolled. Active as he was in the theatrical field and accomplished in financial strategy, Haverly failed.

The new element in management proceeded to put the theatre on a business basis. The arrangement of routes for traveling companies had previously been divided among several booking agents and the work of securing "time" in out of town theatres was a matter of weeks. Moreover the rivalry between the various agents was keen and it was impossible for a manager to know what attraction would play against him in the towns that he proposed to visit. Some of these agents were intent only on getting paid for their booking and did not inquire too closely into the financial status of the manager.

The new method was more businesslike for it looked into the manager's credit as a merchant would that of a customer and the jokes about the actor walking home along the railroad ties disappeared from the pages of *Puck* as the irresponsible manager was forced out of the business. Little by little the Syndicate gathered the booking business into its own hands and was thus able to arrange a route in half an hour and also tell a manager what attractions would play against him in every town. Mr. Abraham Erlanger proved his genius for this work

and could so book a route that similar attractions did not play against each other. These methods imparted to the business a commercial solidity such as had never been enjoyed before and to actors and dramatists greater emoluments. The new prosperity increased the demand for plays and players to interpret them, while the sliding scale of royalties—devised, I think, by Charles Frohman—made the playwright a virtual partner of the manager and enabled Bronson Howard, who had received only twenty-five dollars a night for *The Banker's Daughter,* to reap a fortune of a hundred thousand from *Shenandoah.*

I am quite willing to concede to an institution which has been the object of many attacks, reasonable as well as unreasoning, full recognition of the many material benefits it has bestowed on the theatre and its people. But I deny that it has proved an unmixed blessing, for it is largely responsible for the box-office management of the present day. It is true that good business direction is essential to the best dramatic art, for the audience has an equation, reckoned as one-third, in the representation on the stage, and is actually a part of that representation. Unless the house is filled with a *paying* audience the best results are not obtained. But the box-office should be an equal partner with the *avant-scène* in the control of the theatre and not the autocratic director of its destinies.

Ideal conditions will be attained only in a theatre whose business affairs are conducted by the best of the modern box-office managers and its stage by some one who knows it thoroughly and is not himself an actor.

I have two such men in mind but will not mention their names for fear of creating a riot on the Rialto.

J. H. McVicker of Chicago, almost the last of the race of old-fashioned managers, understood the business "both front and back," and could play a part on the stage should the necessity arise. I have seen him as the Grave-Digger in support of his son-in-law, Edwin Booth. The modern manager is a product of the front of the house and bows to the verdict of the "critic of the box-office"—a phrase coined, not by a member of the Theatrical Syndicate, but by A. M. Palmer. To this inability to handle matters behind the footlights is due the existence of the professional producer, one of the pests of the stage. There are, of course, producers who know their business and the best of these—notably Mr. Belasco and Mrs. Fiske—are producers on their own account. But there are altogether too many who do not know their business.

An incompetent producer will cast an actor for the part, let us say, of a coachman, because he once saw him play a gardener, but would never stretch his imagination to the point of asking him to play a bishop. That is why so many players find themselves bound to a narrow line of rôles by chains of managerial ignorance which they cannot break. Moreover, this producer always looks for types instead of actors. In the belief that a part calls for a long-legged man with blue eyes he walks along Broadway until he meets some one possessed of those peculiarities and engages him without asking if he can act. That is one reason why our stage is overcrowded with incompetents while players of known

ability are unable to obtain an engagement. It accounts also for the failures of plays that might succeed were they not miscast.

It is at rehearsal that the incompetent producer is seen at his worst, and that worst is even worse when the presence of his employer compels him to "show off." No matter how an actor may begin to read the lines, to which he has perhaps devoted considerable thought and study, the autocrat interrupts with a shout of, "That will never do, Mr. Buskin. You must raise your voice and put more pep into your words. More pep, if you want to get your lines across the footlights. People pay their money to hear you talk, not to look at you!"

"Pep" is the burden of the fake producer's song and his constant endeavor is to impress the watching manager with the idea that he shouts whereof he knows. I recall one producer, however, who lent a little variety to his work, for the moment he saw the manager coming in he rose in his place and shrieked: "Them borders! What's the matter with them borders!" And I believe this man actually received a salary for his work.

By a strange perversion of the English tongue the word "production" has come to signify merely the upholstery of the drama, the scenery, costumes, lighting and incidental music, but it really means a great deal more than all that. It covers the selection of the play, which involves a knowledge not only of the drama but of the ever-changing current of popular taste as well, the casting of the play, the drilling of the actors and the elimination of the inferior ones, and also the alteration and boiling down of the manuscript so as to secure the

greatest possible amount of dramatic wheat and the very least of the chaff of verbiage.

The work of the producer is so smoothly blended with that of the dramatist and the actor in the representation of a play that the layman does not know where the one begins and the others end. When the star of the company is his own producer he is only too apt to take advantage of every opportunity thus afforded to exploit himself at the expense of his fellow-players. It is not every star who knows that his own efforts shine all the better when placed in what, from the stellar point of view, is considered competition with the best of talent. The actor who is sincere in seeking the bubble reputation at the stellar mouth is subjected to a degree of rank injustice unknown in any other calling. The star can, and not infrequently does, cut out his best lines and either appropriate them to his own use or else kill them altogether. He can also minimize the force of any words coming from the lips of a fellow-player by studied inattention, and he can always divert attention from others by performing monkey-tricks himself. He can play every scene facing the audience so as to gain a reputation for that "facial expression" which his associate cannot show in the back of his head. He can compel the rest of the company to keep above the key, which materially heightens what the critics call his "quiet natural method" or "reserve force." In presenting a series of plays under that fatal word "repertoire," he can show himself one week in long whiskers and the next with a false stomach and thus gain praise for his "versatility." By these methods he reduces every actor in his support

to a state, not unlike that of a shuttlecock, passed to and fro between the battledores of varied stellar ambitions.

There is one actress in this country possessed of an artistic conscience of such a high order that she always regards a performance as a whole and not as a vehicle for self-exploitation. So far from seeking to minimize the work of her associates she encourages them to do their best, the result being that her audiences leave the theatre in which they have been so well entertained declaring that she is a great actress. The result of this blending of intelligence with the best form of dramatic art, is that her career, as a star, which began in 1882, leaves her, not gasping out her last breath in that house of refuge for senile art, the vaudeville stage, but with popularity as yet undimmed and herself possibly the most distinguished actress in this country. To realize what this means we have only to consider the number of stars blinded by a sense of their own importance who have come and gone since Mrs. Fiske made her first appearance.

"A couple of nice girls that I know are going to appear at Pastor's next week and if you can say a good word for them I'll consider it a favor," said August Brentano to me one day late in the autumn of '79. I hope that my mention of this remote date will not offend the lady with whom this anecdote deals, but hers is a case in which years are a credit, so well have the charm and beauty of her youth been preserved.

Fully aware of my lack of musical knowledge, I asked a friend of acknowledged authority in such matters to accompany me to Tony Pastor's Theatre the following

Monday and listened with more deference than I shall ever accord again to musical criticism. The first of the singers to appear was a girl named Florence Merton and my companion pronounced her voice excellent and predicted for her a bright variety future. Later in the evening a slender, graceful and wonderfully pretty and attractive young girl skipped out on the stage and sang, in what seemed to my untutored taste, a voice of rare sweetness, a song about the violets that bloom in the vernal spring. But my friend shook his head in grave disapproval, declaring that her voice lacked *timbre* and was weak in the lower register, and contrived to deluge my mind with so many technical terms I had never heard of that I was afraid to write what I thought and prepared a sapient paragraph echoing his views, which I think was the first notice ever received in New York by Lillian Russell, whose previous appearance here had been merely as one of Ed. Rice's chorus girls.

But it was not press work that gave Miss Russell her earliest fame. Her own attractiveness stirred theatre-goers long before the critics came lumbering into view with their words of commendation. Dazzled by applause and inexperienced in theatrical affairs her mistakes of those early days are not to be wondered at. Her later period of work and study have never won for her the public recognition that they fairly deserve. Her great success in comic opera was achieved by talent, industry and a personality of rare charm. I trust that these words will atone for the less honest utterance of my callow youth.

One evening, I think in 1877, while calling at the

house of Mr. Parke Godwin, Mr. Henry Watterson of Louisville entered, bringing with him a young woman of rare beauty and frank, engaging manners, who instantly won my susceptible heart and whom he introduced as a native of his own city whom he wished his New York friends to know as she was about to make her metropolitan début as an actress. This was Miss Mary Anderson and before many weeks had elapsed the whole town was talking about her Juliet. I remember that in the conversation that ensued Mr. Watterson harked back to the days when he, too, had been a player, a fact that I have never seen recorded in print.

Miss Anderson's career was unique for she had begun at the top of her profession without undergoing the long apprenticeship in minor parts that other actresses have been compelled to endure. I saw her frequently in such plays as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Ingomar* and shall always remember the rare charm of her beautiful presence though at that time I was not competent to judge of her merits as an artist. She remained on the stage for several years, playing nothing but classic rôles and establishing herself firmly in the popular heart not only as an actress but as a woman of the finest personal character. She left the stage on encountering a blast of hostile criticism and retired to private life in England where she had already won a high professional standing and enjoyed much social success. Unwittingly she exerted a bad influence on the young women of her generation, for thousands of them became convinced that they could play most difficult rôles, notably Juliet, without any preliminary training, provided only they had a chance, and

Mary Anderson, an Actress of Rare Beauty

Kate Castleton, Who Sang "For Goodness' Sake Don't Say I Told You"

it was not long before our stage was invaded by scores of these ambitious ones. Among those whom I recall were Adele Belgarde, Anna Boyle, Helen Ottolengui, Adelaide Cherie, Adelina Gasparini, Selina Fetters and Inez Rochelle, all of whom appeared as Juliet, excepting Miss Cherie, who essayed Camille. Miss Belgarde later appeared as Hamlet with but moderate success.

The most conspicuous of the new Juliets was Margaret Mather who had been discovered by George Edgar, an actor known only by his Lear, and whom J. M. Hill, made confident by his success with Denman Thompson, which will be described in the next chapter, undertook to star. Hill placed Miss Mather in the Brooklyn home of John Habberton, the author of *Helen's Babies,* for purposes of study, and meanwhile set about the work of awakening public interest and curiosity. On certain days Miss Mather would repair to the Union Square Hotel while her manager would assemble a few newspaper men and out-of-town managers in order that they might, as he expressed it, "hear this wonderful girl of mine read a few passages from Shakespeare and perhaps recite a poem or two and afterward drink a glass of wine with her." He would always have lying in wait three or four old-time actors and these he would bring forth to heighten the interest of the occasion. They would begin by confidentially assuring the guests that they had but little faith in these amateurs, having seen so many of them fail, and that, if it were not for their confidence in Mr. Hill's managerial acumen, they would not be bothered to listen to this one. Then the reading would begin and with it the acting. I recall one aged histrion

who used to startle the company by crying out in the midst of a scene, "My God, is this Adelaide Neilson come back to earth!" Others would wipe the tears from their eyes or wring the hand of the manager with a few broken words of congratulation. The effect of this torrent of enthusiasm from mummers sceptical but a moment before, was tremendous.

Miss Mather, as I recall her, possessed a certain crude talent and eventually became a paying star.

Mr. Hill's next stellar venture was not so successful and cost him a good deal of money. At this time Dion Boucicault was conducting a school of acting in Palmer's Theatre and discovered, among his pupils, a young woman whom he assured Mr. Palmer was a "heaven-born genius." To which the manager replied: "Bring on your heaven-born genius! I've had nearly fifteen years of them."

On hearing the girl, whose name, I think, was Cora Edsall, Palmer was inclined to agree with Boucicault in his estimate of her talent and before long Mr. Hill heard of this new prodigy, listened attentively to her reading, and finally agreed to star her. What was to have been her tour began in Albany and I think ended there. I made the trip in charge of the press-work and our little band included Steele Mackaye, invited because he had a strong actor-like face and a great mane of black hair; Pat Sheedy, the gambler, because of his low voice and quiet, refined appearance; the elderly critic of a sporting paper because he had long white whiskers, and the dramatists, Henry Guy Carleton and James Roche, making three of that calling, including Mackaye. Each

one of these playwrights was careful not to let either one of the other two be closeted with Hill for fear he would sell him a play. Our little group was organized into an effective claque, led by Mackaye, who sat in the very front of the box and made an imposing appearance. I remember that at a certain moment he half rose in his seat and exclaimed, "By the gods!" then started a round of applause which the rest of us promptly took up, the whiskered one in an orchestra seat beating lustily with his umbrella on the floor.

Mr. Hill was no niggard in the matter of expenses, and we had plenty to eat and drink during our stay in Albany. He had provided an excellent company, including William H. Thompson, E. J. Henley and Amy Busby, with Lorimer Stoddard as stage manager. Nor was Mr. Carleton's play, *The Pembertons,* without merit; but nothing could save the star, for the truth was that she was an elocutionist and not an actress and the two are widely different. And yet she had fooled two men of such great experience as Palmer and Boucicault. Wisely enough Hill abandoned all thought of making her a Juliet, for Shakespeare wrote for actors, and not for elocutionists, a fact not yet known to a great many members of the theatrical profession, nor to the many savants who style themselves his commentators.

CHAPTER XIII

LONG ago there was situated on Greenwich Avenue near Twelfth Street, the Columbia Opera House, a theatre of rather low repute which more than once was raided by the police. It was a variety house and one of the most popular of its sketches was called *The Female Bathers,* which served to introduce a Yankee farmer on a visit to New York. A Chicago merchant happened to see this sketch one night and was much impressed by the impersonation of the farmer at the hands of one Denman Thompson. He saw the piece three or four times, then made Thompson's acquaintance and suggested that the sketch be re-written in four acts, and offered as a full evening's entertainment at first-class houses. To this Thompson agreed and the production of *Joshua Whitcomb* not only served to introduce James M. Hill into theatrical affairs, but also gave us the American rural drama, which has not its exact counterpart on any foreign stage. In the peasant dramas of the older countries the audience is invited to look down on the actors and note their quaintness, their humor, and other humble qualities, but in *Joshua Whitcomb* and its successor, *The Old Homestead,* as well as in other plays of the same school, the actors are presented on a plane of perfect equality with their audience.

It is interesting to remark in this connection that

whereas those diversions of the wealthy classes, the New Theatre and the Theatre of Arts and Letters gave us neither plays nor actors nor dramatists worthy of note, the newsboys' theatre in Baxter Street and the low variety house on Greenwich Avenue, yielded two of the most original and popular forms of amusement that we have ever been blessed with.

There was a much greater variety of amusement during my younger days than modern New York can offer, and my investigating mind made me familiar with many resorts of a kind that do not flourish now. Chief of these was Harry Hill's Dance House, a picturesque, tumbledown wooden building on East Houston Street, near Broadway. Its proprietor was a sturdy Englishman of the old-fashioned sporting type, who prided himself on his honesty and jealously upheld the reputation of his house as a place in which no man could be robbed. Many a visitor carrying more money in his pockets than was safe would leave the bulk of it with Harry for safe keeping while he continued his revels there and elsewhere and never had any trouble in regaining it at the end of his debauch.

One end of the building contained a stable in which Hill kept the curiously mis-shapen horse that he used to drive along Fifth Avenue and through Central Park on pleasant afternoons, and it is worthy of record that even before those harbingers of dawning art, the chromo and the Rogers groups, had appeared he adorned the walls of his dance hall with a fine set of Hogarth engravings to be gazed at by the nightly assembly of rakes and harlots. The place had other visitors, too, and it was said

that no man could show himself above the surface of metropolitan life without passing at least once through the rooms of Harry Hill and Charley Delmonico. The dance hall had a very small stage with a few rags of scenery, and here boxing matches took place and many players of later fame appeared. Weber and Fields have played there and so have Andrew Mack, W. J. Scanlan, and many others. It was here also that John L. Sullivan made his first appearance in New York to spar for a purse of fifty dollars offered by Harry to anyone who would stand in front of him for four rounds.

Sullivan came on from Boston especially for this event and it is a matter of record that he seated himself on the steps of the convent over the way and would not enter the dance house until he had counted a hundred visitors enter, when, knowing the admission to be fifty cents, he calculated that the amount of the purse was actually in Hill's hands. I believe he won the money in the first round and was carried around the hall on the shoulders of enthusiasts. His opponent had been so confident of winning, that earlier in the day he had sent his wife to Hill to collect the money.

Hill's was the scene of another first appearance of a different nature for it was there that the Salvation Army held their first meeting in America, having asked and received the proprietor's permission. As a literal fact the rough crowd that had come to scoff remained, if not to pray at least to recognize the sincerity of the evangelists, for when the meeting was over they passed the hat and collected a goodly sum as their contribution to the cause.

I came to know Harry Hill quite well and I seem to hear his voice now as he stood on the platform according to his wont, to introduce the boxers. His invariable formula when introducing a Negro contestant was: "Mr. Johnson's color is different from ours but you'll often find a white heart under a black skin."

Still another first appearance at this place was electric lighting for it was here that Mr. Edison's scheme of illumination was first introduced in New York.

On the other side of Houston Street were the old-fashioned houses of call, the House of Lords, the House of Commons and Harry Clifton's. In the last-named, meetings were held on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, not unlike those described by Thackeray in his accounts of the Back Kitchen, whence Costigan drove out Colonel Newcome and his son with his obscene ditty. Admission was free and there was excellent glee-singing to be heard. Visitors were of course expected to order refreshments for the benefit of the house and the food and drink were of the best quality. Nor were the waiters permitted to hound any one as is customary in the free pavilions at Coney Island.

It was at Clifton's that the tuneful songs of Dave Braham were popularized long before he became the musical director of Harrigan and Hart, and I recall at least three admirable singers among the rest. These were Harry Waldemar, a typical British music-hall artist of the period; the chairman, Harding, who was also a music publisher, and Johnny Roach, an inimitable singer of comic Irish songs. Harding's rendering of a song called "The Vagabond" still lingers in my memory as

does his announcement of the singers, "Give your orders to the waiters, gents, and then Mr. Roach will oblige and after him Mr. Harry Waldemar."

A place that had a horrid fascination for me because of the depraved nature of its patrons was Owney Geoghegan's, on the Bowery. It was crowded nightly with the toughest and most disreputable element in the city and these were served by waiters of unexampled ferocity. It was the favorite resort of professional mendicants and, once within its walls the blind man saw that he got the right change, the cripple laid aside his crutches and the victim of starvation paid for his drinks from a full purse. Geoghegan's funeral was an imposing event. Two wives attended, and the drivers of their respective hacks fought all the way to Calvary for the place of precedence directly behind the hearse, each widow hoping that in this fashion she could establish conjugal rights.

Another disreputable resort was Armory Hall in Hester Street, kept by Billy McGlory and frequented by street walkers and the males of their species, with a sprinkling of sight seers of a better class. It was a dance hall and the waiters were always ready to introduce strangers to desirable partners. McGlory was a man of rather fine appearance and to him was due the failure of the Hotel Brunswick, one of the finest hostelries that New York has ever known.

It happened in this wise. One afternoon in midwinter, a well-dressed, gentlemanly individual called there to arrange for a late supper with which he intended to wind up a long sleigh-ride. He offered a money

deposit, but such was his appearance that it was refused. About two hours after midnight he arrived in company with such a following as had never passed the Brunswick portals before and although the whole affair was carried off decorously the matter got into the papers and from that day the house steadily declined to its fall.

In due course of time, Armory Hall was closed by the police and McGlory sent to prison. Afterward he conducted a livery stable, regarding which occupation he once said to a friend of mine: "These horses can kick but thank God they can't go to the District Attorney!"

There was at this time at the corner of Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue, where an entrance to the subway now stands, a small theatre, reconstructed from a church in which Patti first sang here and where, later, Dr. McGlynn preached. It was known as Jack Aberle's, and Lena Aberle, the manager's daughter, played occasional engagements there as a star, occupying herself the rest of the time in the box-office. She must have weighed two hundred and fifty pounds and always played Camille for her semi-annual benefit. She favored moonlight effects and insisted on the introduction of lunar illumination into every piece. It was a ridiculous little place of amusement but highly diverting and many a pleasant evening have I passed there. The actors received part of their pay in bar-checks and were expected to keep their faces sober when Lena's dying gasps shook the frail scenery. Nevertheless two players of later renown graduated from Aberle's. One of these was Peter F. Dailey, one of the most amusing entertainers ever seen

on the New York stage, and the other was James T. Powers, whom Edward Harrigan saw and rescued. Almost immediately Powers made a hit in *Fun in a Photograph Gallery* and repeated his success in London, a most unusual experience for actors of his generation.

Far more picturesque and interesting to me than any of the resorts that I have named were the opium joints then springing into existence in the purlieus of Chinatown. So far as I know no novelist of great distinction since Dickens has obtained from any of such places the material in which they were so rich. "Low life," as almost anything below Eighth Street was called, was taboo in the *Century* and other magazines, and it was a waste of time for writers who deemed themselves literary to deal with such unsavory places. There was, however, a *Sun* reporter, named William Norr, who wrote for his paper two or three stories of such a striking nature that they met with the instant hearty approval of Mr. Dana, who rewarded the author with special compensation.

I visited many of these places and although I smoked the opium from time to time I never acquired the habit. It was the atmosphere of the joint and the conversation of the frequenters that fascinated me, and let it be remembered that they enriched our language with two bits of slang. The pipes were made of joints of bamboo, hence the word "joint," now applicable to all sorts of places; and "dope" which, with its derivatives, is now used in common parlance, had its origin in the following fashion.

Many years ago when prairie schooners were the means

of transit across the continent, there hung from the axle-tree a bucket of black wagon grease containing what was called a daub stick with which the lubricant was applied. The earliest American frequenters of the Chinese joints in San Francisco were men who had crossed from the east in these prairie schooners and as the word "daub" had become corrupted into "dope" the opium paste which looked exactly like the axle-grease, acquired its present name by a quite natural process and soon became thus known in Pell Street.

The criminal classes of New York, including bunco-steerers, gamblers, prostitutes, "con" men and thieves, took to opium smoking as soon as it was introduced here, and, as the drug loosens the tongue and develops social qualities rather than the fighting spirit engendered by whiskey, the conversation that I used to listen to was most edifying and quite of another world than any that I had thus far known. Members of the dramatic profession were not infrequently to be seen in those places and indeed it was with one of the best known actors of his day that I made my first visit to the joint under Paddy Martin's saloon at No. 9 Bowery.

Another player who was also a smoker was Pearl Eytinge, a woman of vivacious charm and no mean accomplishment, whom Lester Wallack had in earlier years declared to be "the hope of the American stage." I have seen her lying in a joint in Bleecker Street reading poetry to a pickpocket beside her; I have seen her on Mr. Wallack's stage playing an ingénue part to which she was ill-suited by temperament and manner of life; and I have seen her at one of the great masked balls at

the Academy of Music, the centre of a group of fashionable admirers.

Pearl's parentage was a matter of doubt but she regarded herself as an off-shoot of the well-known English family of Eytinge, the most distinguished member of which was Rose Eytinge, the actress. It is related of our off-shoot that an elderly person of benevolent aspect, who had been presented to her, said, "My child, is your father living yet?" To this Pearl made prompt answer: "No, not yet."

Many years after these opium joint days I was working on a version of "Cinderella" to be given in spectacular form at the Academy of Music when Miss Eytinge appeared with a troupe of young Swedish girls of her discovery, whom she called the "Barrison Sisters," and asked for an engagement for the whole lot, including herself, at fifteen dollars a week each.

"But," I said, "I heard quite lately that you had got a house and lot out of a certain party. What do you want with fifteen dollars?"

"Because the party's gone off and left me," she replied, "and how I got it is quite a long story."

Two or three of us adjourned with her to a near-by place of refreshment and for half an hour we listened to the story of her experiences in the spiritualistic business as an associate of the notorious Madam Diss Debar. I gathered from her discourse that the death notices in the daily papers are carefully read by professional mediums and that only those of the wealthy are followed up. So it happened that the passing of the wife of a man named Cheseboro, a well-known inventor, claimed the

attention of Madam Diss Debar, and one of her "cappers" was sent forth to secure the attendance of the bereaved husband at one of her séances. Meanwhile a photograph of the deceased lady was obtained and it was found that by the judicious use of cosmetics, Miss Eytinge could be made up to resemble her. The night came when Mr. Cheseboro entered the dimly lighted room frequented by the spirits, was quickly recognized and a messenger despatched for Miss Eytinge. Under the skilful hands of the medium she was made up for the part she was to play while the exact spot on the green baize carpet where she was to stand was marked with white chalk. The séance went merrily along with Napoleon Bonaparte, Abraham Lincoln and Little Bright-Eyes hammering on the table and revealing their presence in other spectral ways.

"Don't you want to hear from some of the loved ones who have gone before?" inquired Cheseboro's neighbor, and he bawled out: "Is the spirit of my lost darling present?" That gave the office to Miss Eytinge and she glided forth and stood just where the faint light would fall on her veiled figure.

"My darling, it is indeed you! Tell me if you are happy!"

Miss Eytinge had not been on the turf twenty years for nothing. She replied promptly, "Yes, but I need money," and then and there she secured one hundred dollars from her prey. Some months later he gave her a house and lot, stipulating that she should not have the deeds recorded until he gave her permission, but the next morning when the door of the Hall of Records was

opened she fell through with the deeds in her hand and that brought the partnership to a close.

An eminently respectable resort which ante-dated the time of which I write and was of distinct educational value was the Central Park Garden, at the corner of Fifty-ninth Street and Sixth Avenue, where Theodore Thomas gave open air concerts with his fine orchestra and beer of the finest quality was sold for five cents a mug. It was here that Mr. Thomas introduced, on certain nights in the week, the music of Wagner, a number of Germans, many of whom were Jews, agreeing to support him by their attendance and it is pleasant to record that they kept their promise faithfully until Wagner gained a growing American following.

Of the restaurants and cafés of this period few survive save in the memory of the older generation. The first Italian table d'hôte was that of Moretti, opened in the Fifties at the corner of Third Avenue and Fourteenth Street, mainly for the purpose of supplying Mario and Grisi, then singing at the Academy of Music, with their native food. It was Moretti who introduced into this country spaghetti, olives, Chianti and other Italian delicacies, and his name has been perpetuated on a pavement in West Thirty-fifth Street opposite the restaurant which he maintained in later life. His dinner was so generous that no one save an Italian singer on his off night could eat all of it. Martinelli's in Third Avenue was another early table d'hôte and was much frequented by artists, and as the years rolled on scores of them appeared in various parts of the city.

Maria's, founded at a much later period in McDougall

"Chicken Night" at "Maria's" in the Early Nineties; the Author Seated at the Extreme Left and "Rip" Anthony, the Whisker Artist, Standing on the Table. Drawn by George B. Lukes

Street, and still existing much further uptown, was a notable place of refection in its day and frequented by the so-called bohemian element. Clara Louise Kellogg, Paul du Chaillu, Robert W. Chambers, George B. Luks and scores of other friends of mine were usually to be found in that little basement dining-room. Luks was at this time drawing black and white comics of remarkable humor in the weekly *Truth* and not many saw in his work promise of the future that lay before him as a serious genre painter in oil. The accompanying picture, drawn by him about this time of "chicken night at Maria's" gives us a taste of his early quality.

Half a dollar was the usual price for a table d'hôte dinner at that time and I do not remember any that cost more than double that sum, which was the price at Moretti's and also at the Café Martin in its earlier years. Martin's was the best of the French table d'hôtes and they, too, were numerous, especially in the French quarter south of Washington Square and in the side streets off Sixth Avenue.

There were chop-houses in those days with English instead of German waiters and the most famous of these was that of George Browne, whose first habitat was in Fourth Avenue, directly opposite the stage doors of Wallack's and the Union Square theatres. It was called the "Green Room" and it was there that the Lamb's Club, made up largely of the Wallack company, had its origin. Browne usually passed for an Englishman though he was really born in New Hampshire, and he occasionally played dialect parts on Mr. Wallack's stage. It was said that he had a code of signals by which he announced to

patrons in the audience the special dish to be served in his chop-house after the performance. Some time during the Seventies he moved uptown and acquired the patronage of a great many young men like myself whom he entertained by his anecdotes of his friends the actors, many of whom he declared "might be in any minute."

A more entertaining theatrical "hang-out" was the Criterion, kept by Charlie Collins at the northeast corner of Fourteenth Street and Union Square. Among its habitués I recall Charles R. Thorne of the Union Square, John Matthews, who had been on the stage of Ford's Theatre the night Lincoln was killed, and innumerable old-time players. At precisely eleven o'clock in the morning the free lunch, consisting of a wide segment of cheese and a bowl of hard crackers, was placed upon the counter across the room from the bar. The comedians present made funny falls toward the repast while the tragedians advanced with stately tread, and in an incredibly short space of time, nothing remained of the banquet but the rind of the cheese which by some daily miracle still maintained an upright position, and a handful of impalpably fine cracker dust at the bottom of the bowl.

The rent of the place was collected by a local politician who acted as agent for the estate and Charlie, who was a master of strategic finance, found it cheaper to get him drunk than to pay. Sometimes he was left lying on a sofa in a back room surrounded by empty bottles which he was supposed to have ordered and the cost of which was deducted from the rent.

The Maison Dorée was the earliest of many attempts

to encroach on the patronage of Delmonico's. It was situated on the south side of Union Square, west of Broadway, and some of the gilding on the façade of the building was still visible in quite recent years. But Delmonico's was already firmly established in public favor and this enterprise, and many other similar ones that succeeded it, failed.

The first of the Delmonicos came to this country in the train of Thomas Addis Emmett, who emigrated after the hanging of his brother Robert. Having established himself in a modest shop that proved profitable, Delmonico leased larger premises and some years later a successor of his name conducted what is now the Stevens House, where my father boarded, I think in the Forties, for four-fifty a week. From that time descent has always been from uncle to nephew until the dynasty ceased with the death of the last, Charles.

Delmonico came from the province of Ticino, in Italian Switzerland, whence have come many of the best restaurateurs of the world, among them, one Solari, who brought with him a letter to the then reigning Delmonico and after a number of years opened a place of his own in University Place. Delmonico had always been very strict in regard to the reputation of his house and would never serve a meal in a private dining-room to less than three persons, no matter how well-known they might be. On one occasion August Belmont ordered a dinner in one of these rooms for himself, his wife and an expected guest. The latter failed to appear and finally Mr. Belmont summoned a waiter and bade him serve for two. The servitor informed the head-waiter

who in turn consulted Mr. Delmonico and the latter went at once to Mr. Belmont, perhaps the most important of his patrons, and explained that he could not, in justice to himself, violate a law that he had made for the especial benefit of just such honored persons as Mr. Belmont and his wife. The financier yielded the point and afterward revenged himself by making bets with his friends that they could not be entertained with fewer than two guests in a private room.

In the strict observance of this law, Solari saw his opportunity and conducted his own restaurant in such a manner that those who dined in its *cabinets particuliers*, never had any cause for complaint, either on that account or because of the cuisine.

But these establishments were beyond the means of the young men with whom I associated and we were more likely to be found at a French or Italian table d'hôte or in such hostelries as the Sinclair House at Eighth Street and Broadway, Mouquin's in Fulton Street, or at one of the many excellent English chop-houses. The *Puck* staff used to lunch at Koster and Bial's in Park Place, while Park Row reporters patronized Hitchcock's, famous for its butter-cakes and beef and beans, or at Nash and Crook's in Nassau Street. It was said that a single meal in Hitchcock's would convert a journalist into a newspaper man.

Koster and Bial had their beginnings in the basement of the *Tribune* Building, or at least it was there that they achieved their first notoriety. Mr. Dana of the *Sun*, who was at that time remorselessly attacking Whitelaw Reid, denounced him with a new vigor for permitting the sale

of rum on premises sacred to the memory of Horace Greeley, who had been a strong advocate of teetotalism. Thus the fame of the "tall tower rum shop" was spread abroad to the great profit of its proprietors. Later Messrs. Koster and Bial opened their music-hall in West Twenty-third Street, under the direction of Bial's brother Rudolph, an accomplished musician. After his death, vaudeville was introduced and it was here that Carmencita created a furor. The dancer had already appeared on Broadway without attracting attention and had been secured for Twenty-third Street at moderate cost. I entered the place one night with Julian Ralph and he became so deeply impressed with her dancing, that he wrote an article in the *Sun* that literally brought the town to her nimble feet. Sargent painted her portrait; fashion saw her by invitation in Chase's studio and then flocked to the music hall to see her again.

The Café Martin was one of the few first-class restaurants in New York in which Negroes were constantly entertained. They were well mannered, well dressed and seemed more like blackened Frenchmen than Africans. Most of them were well-to-do Haitians and their presence never offended the other patrons. The Café Martin was the headquarters of the local French colony and it was the nearest approach to a Parisian café which the town has known. Madame Martin presided at the *comptoir* and cards and dominos were played at the little marble tables.

The better class of Austrians made the Café Fleischmann, at Tenth Street and Broadway, their favorite house of call. Situated on property belonging to Grace

Church, it was leased with the understanding that neither malt nor alcoholic beverages should be sold on the ground floor, but there was a café upstairs where everything could be obtained. Established at the time of the Centennial Exposition, its specialties were Vienna rolls and Vienna coffee and its cuisine, in other respects, was excellent. In the café was situated the round table, called by Jim Huneker, "the philosophers' table," and to which I used to refer as the local Reichstadt. Among those who gathered daily about this board were Anton Seidl, Louis Fleischmann, the originator of the New York bread-line; Dr. Bleyer, who with Mr. Fleishmann, contributed generously to the maintenance of the Thalia Theatre; Heinrich Conried, later the Director of the Metropolitan Opera House; Carl Herrmann, the manager of the Thalia Theatre; Emanuel Lederer, a German actor of the old Stadt Theatre company, who had first suggested to Edwin Booth the feasibility of a German tour, and Carl Hauser, already described. Mr. Lederer dealt in plays and operas and was an authority on the history of the European stage. He knew every scene in every play and was always quick to recognize anything like plagiarism on the part of an American author.

Another resort in which I spent many an evening was a café kept by an Italian named Buchignani in Third Avenue near Fifteenth Street and much frequented by some of the singers and musicians of the Academy of Music. Its proprietor was a man of education who had been the Librarian of the House of Representatives in his day and had also undertaken certain foreign missions of a confidential nature for President Lincoln. He was

Carmencita, Spanish Dancer of Great Renown

Miss Vesta Tilley, a True Artist in Male Impersonation

agreeable, well informed and kindly and one could always find good company in his little saloon. I remember that one afternoon while I was sitting there, two or three excited Italians entered and fell into earnest conversation with "Buck." After their departure he explained their errand. It seemed that Ettore Barili, the half-brother of Adelina Patti, and the man to whom she owed more for her musical education and early opportunities than she did to anyone else, had just died in poverty and his friends had been up to the Windsor Hotel to ask Adelina to help bury him. This the great singer had refused to do, saying with a shrug of her shoulders, "When he had money why didn't he save it?" It was George Washington Childs of Philadelphia who paid for the interment. I may add that Patti's other half-brother was employed at about this time as a dish-washer at Riccadonna's on Union Square.

CHAPTER XIV

MY entrance into Park Row was almost coincident with the appearance of a new journalistic force that was destined to prove as revolutionary as that of the leg-drama in the business of theatricals. That new force was newspaper illustration and it came to us from a Russian hand and through one of those chance happenings that so often turn the tide of affairs.

It was in 1878 that Valerian Gribayedoff, a grandnephew of a distinguished poet of that name, arrived in New York and sought employment in Park Row. Born in Russia and educated there and in Chiselhurst, England, he had made his way to South America, served as a drummer-boy in a Chilean revolution and worked his passage to New York on a sailing vessel by decorating the captain's cabin. After earning his living as best he could for a few years, he joined the staff of the penny *Truth,* recently started by Josh Hart. Speaking many languages he found much exercise for his talents at Castle Garden, where he was quite sure to discover among every boatload of immigrants an exiled noble worthy of a "write-up" in Mr. Hart's sensational paper. The time came, however, when his employer informed him that he had had enough of these dubious noblemen and unless he could unearth one of real distinction he might look elsewhere for work. It was with a sorrow-

ful heart then that the young man made his way to Castle Garden, where he arrived just in time to see a person of sinister countenance and wearing the uniform of a Russian official, sneak ashore with a look of apprehension on his face. The man nearly fainted with dismay when Gribayedoff addressed him in his native tongue but he cheered up on learning that he was to be written up as a prince and warned that he must live up to his rank. He was then led into the presence of Hart and the latter was assured that this was a real prince as could readily be seen by his uniform, and his discoverer was permitted to exploit him to the extent of a column.

The next day Hart entered the office and exclaimed: "Look a-here, Grib! That's the helluva Rooshian prince you brought in here yesterday!"

"What's the matter with him?" inquired the other with sinking heart.

"He's up there at the corner selling collar-buttons," retorted Hart.

It happened that the very next day I dropped in at the office of *Truth,* to which I was an occasional contributor, and found "Grib" making a pen and ink copy of a photograph. In answer to my query he said, "I've induced them to try a new experiment here and print pictures in the paper."

That was the beginning of modern illustrated daily journalism in this country. The *Graphic,* which preceded it, had used a slow process and failed after sinking immense sums of money, but Gribayedoff's portraits —he had an extraordinary knack at catching a likeness— caught the popular fancy at once and it was not long

before he opened an office for the purpose of supplying all the newspapers. The half-tone process, now generally used, had not then been invented and it was necessary to copy all photographs with pen and ink. As his business increased, Gribayedoff engaged an assistant named Anthony; then, fearing that the latter would master the art in its entirety and set up a rival shop, he limited his work to the putting on of whiskers and eyebrows, in which work the young man soon acquired rare skill. From this time on, Anthony's interest in public characters was limited to their hirsute adornments. He would hang around Park Row waiting for some one to come into the public eye by death, sensation or political nomination. "Has he whiskers?" he would exclaim and, if assured in the affirmative would hurry to Grib's office and set to work.

Joseph Pulitzer, who entered the field of metropolitan journalism soon after this, was the first to realize the enormous possibilities of this new method of giving an added interest to the news of the day.

The *World*, under the competent guidance of Manton Marble and William Henry Hurlbert, had been witty and scholarly, but it had lost money, partly through the scarcity of those capable of appreciating wit and scholarship and partly because it was believed to be under the influence of Jay Gould. Its staff included Ivory Chamberlain, a journalist of real distinction and fine literary taste, whose son, Samuel Chamberlain, I came to know intimately in later years; Richard Henry Stoddard, the poet; William C. Brownell, now a literary adviser of the Scribners and a critic of established reputation; and

George T. Lanigan, one of the truest humorists of his generation and the author of the *Out of the World Fables,* and many poems, including *The Ahkoond of Swat.*

While my sister and I were collecting material for an anthology of poetry that we called *Every Day in the Year,* we came across an interesting and little-known circumstance in regard to the last-named poem. Early in the year of January, 1876, the ruler of a remote eastern principality died after a reign that had been so long and peaceful that very few persons outside of the British Foreign Office had ever heard of either Swat or its venerable ruler the Ahkoond. At this time the cable service was new and the Associated Press did not know exactly what news was worth sending across the ocean and what was not and when the despatch containing the tidings reached the *World* office, Lanigan, who was on the night desk, hunted in vain through the encyclopaedias for information from which to prepare a fitting obituary. The name appealed to his sense of humor and the next morning he wrote the verses beginning:

"What, what, what,
What's the news from Swat?
Sad news,
Bad news,
Comes by the cable led
Through the Indian Ocean's bed,
Through the Persian Gulf, the Red
Sea and the Med-
Iterrannean—he's dead:
The Ahkoond of Swat is dead!"

The despatch was printed at the same time in the English papers and the funny name appealed to another

humorous writer, Edward Lear, and he at once prepared a poem which closely resembled that of the American writer and began:

"Who, or why, or which, or what
Is the Ahkoond of Swat?

"Is he tall or short or dark or fair?
Does he sit on a stool or a sofa or chair,
Or squat
The Ahkoond of Swat?"

Baron de Grimm was working for the *Evening Telegram,* but his efforts were chiefly in the way of cartoon and caricature, both marked with a distinct German flavor. It was Pulitzer who eagerly seized upon the idea of illustrating the columns of the *World* with photographs and he extended his sales by printing in his Sunday issue pictures and "write-ups" of leading citizens, their wives and daughters. He afterward classified the inhabitants according to their several occupations, and straightway his Sunday columns glistened with portrait groups of Newark barbers and Stamford plumbers. Pulitzer had been a very poor man and his rise to the eminence that he attained in later life was an extraordinary achievement. Because of his early struggles he always retained a sincere and understanding sympathy with the poor toiler. His eyesight failed in his later years, though it was generally believed in the office that he could see more than he professed to, but his brain remained unclouded to the last. That was why the excellence of his editorial page—a quality which has long survived him—was in marked contrast to the frightful appearance of the Sunday issue with its sensational pic-

tures and crude colors. Every editorial was read to him each day by a secretary, but no human tongue could describe what the Sunday supplement looked like.

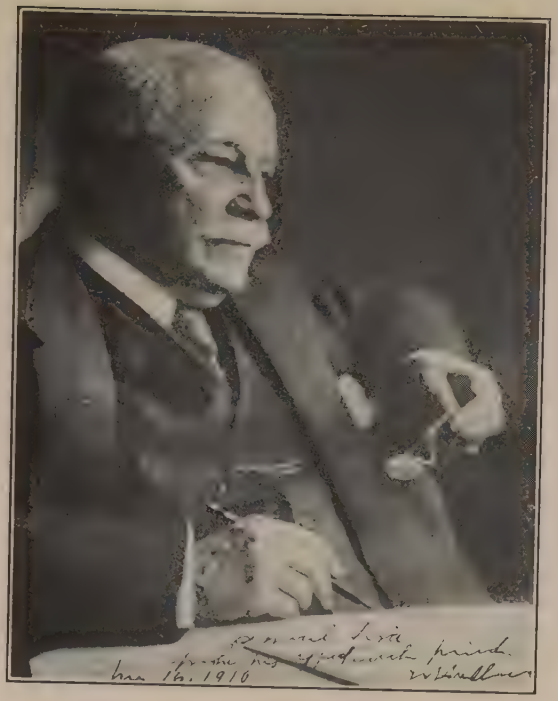
Another element that edged its way into Park Row about this time—at least I think it was previously unknown—was the fungus growth called "office politics," than which no more demoralizing influence in a newspaper staff can be imagined. In later years the growth of this fungus has been nourished by the absenteeism of newspaper proprietors and the sprouting on their heads of those gray hairs that breed suspicion. The high salaries paid in recent years to men holding executive positions have also contributed to this evil, for the shrewd office politician devotes more attention to holding his own job, securing an increased salary and downing those whom he regards as his rivals, than he does to the interests of the paper. For this reason it is fatal for an ambitious young newspaper worker to attract the favorable attention of his employer, for, sooner or later, the hands of those clothed in brief authority will be turned against him. And the evil machinations will be conducted so smoothly and the malice so carefully veiled that even the most experienced proprietor will be unable to detect the animus.

The newspaper proprietor who spends his time abroad is never entirely cut off from communication with at least two or three of his employees and these, so zealous is their devotion to his service, are prone to regret that "Jones is his own worst enemy" or that "the unfortunate state of Smith's health necessitates his frequent absence from the office." I recall the case of one journalist of

greater vigor than experience, who was artfully encouraged by the members of the little cabal arrayed against him, to undertake various activities without regard to their cost, and these plotters were unanimous in their approval when he proposed to give a series of expensive dinners as a means of luring citizens of distinction to his interviewing pen. The office politicians also voiced their approval in the letters sent to their employer, a man of well-known parsimony. They alluded to the splendor of these banquets, the good taste displayed in the selection of rare wines and delicacies and said that the distinguished citizens were all highly pleased with the innovation. Thereupon the proprietor of the paper paid close attention to the interviews, not one of which was of the slightest value, though the writer thereof had been craftily assured that they were "great stuff." Before long the enterprising journalist was working elsewhere.

I trust I may be excused for mentioning a case that concerned me personally, although it was without disastrous effect. While I was working on the *Herald,* many years later than the period with which I am now dealing, Mr. Bennett, then returning to Paris from one of his periodical visits to New York, appointed me by wireless from the steamer to a post on the editorial council, and a few days later there appeared in another paper a paragraph to this effect:

"Mr. James L. Ford, whose able literary criticisms have done much to enhance the value of the *Herald,* has been placed on the editorial council of that journal by the express order of its proprietor. Mr. Bennett has



William Dean Howells, a Distinguished Figure in American Letters

Chester S. Lord, Managing Editor of the *New York Sun*

always desired to be represented in the council by a close personal friend, and it is in that capacity, as well as through his literary ability that Mr. Ford assumes what is likely to become a permanent position. His portrait recently appeared in a magazine among a group entitled, 'Moulders of Public Opinion.' "

It was with a heart filled with dismay that I showed this bit of amiable eulogy to John Burke, a *Herald* colleague of vast experience in Park Row. He read it carefully and then handed it back saying: "Jim, that's one of the worst cracks ever delivered in this town. Find out who wrote it and you'll know where at least one of your enemies lives."

The malice in the paragraph lay in two sentences, that in which allusion was made to my personal intimacy with my employer and that which denoted my appearance in a magazine as a "Moulder of Public Opinion," and I doubt not that even before I read it the kind hand of its author had mailed it to the Paris office. As I had never spoken to Mr. Bennett but once in my life, it was judged that he would suspect me of boasting of our intimate personal relations and assuming superior authority as a controlling influence in the office. Moreover no newspaper proprietor likes to see his employees featured in a magazine for their influence on the policy of the paper.

There was one newspaper in town in which, thanks to the almost constant presence of its chief editor and the firm rule of Chester S. Lord, its managing editor at the time with which I deal, office politics was never known to show its malignant face. Charles A. Dana was

at this time the leading editor of the town and the *New York Sun,* consisting of but four pages, a great and growing force in journalism. It was impossible to work for the *Sun* without being conscious of Mr. Dana's critical eye. The first time I ever wrote for him I took up my pen with a feeling of awe such as I had never before experienced. Two days later I received an envelope containing nothing but a clipping from my matter with the phrase "none *are*" sharply underscored. I have never used it since.

Mr. Dana was a man of fine literary taste and knew a poem when he saw it. One has only to study his anthology, "The Household Book of Poetry," compiled when he was a comparatively young man, to wonder what he would have thought of certain fake bards of to-day. Possessed of a vigorous mind, great political knowledge and a noble capacity for hating, he was easily the leading figure in his profession. He had two weaknesses, however, and many were they who successfully played on them. Snakes and queer foreigners had an irresistible appeal for him, and George Starr, who later became the managing director of the Barnum show and at this time was conducting a museum on Broadway, could always get a column in the *Sun* by judiciously allowing one of his pythons to escape. Queer foreigners speaking outlandish tongues could always worm their way into Mr. Dana's private office and not infrequently into his home. In this way more than one fakir succeeded in making use of the *Sun's* columns.

Mr. James Gordon Bennett was at this time a dominant force in American journalism. He knew that to

make money it was necessary first to spend it prodigally. His motto was to "keep the people guessing," and for years the *Herald* was the most talked of journal in America, if not in the world. Living abroad most of the time and frequently appearing in New York with terrifying suddenness, he was a mysterious and sinister figure in the eyes of his subordinates. His home-coming always presaged disaster to somebody, for what he called "shaking 'em up" always meant shaking some one out.

A story that aptly illustrates some of his peculiarities and which I now feel privileged to relate, I had from the lips of Mr. Samuel S. Chamberlain, for many years Mr. Bennett's secretary and close companion and one of the ablest men in the profession of journalism.

On one occasion, while living in Paris, Mr. Bennett began one of his periodical drinking bouts, of which fact his secretary took prompt notice when summoned to his presence. "Sam," said his chief with characteristic unexpectedness, "I am tired of all this talk of the *Herald* being controlled by the Roman Catholic Church, and of the number of Trinity College men on its staff. Now I want you to write an editorial that will put us right before the public and show that we have no affiliation with Rome. Attack the Catholic Church, its monasteries, nunneries and schools, and make it as strong as you can. Write the editorial and bring it to me this evening."

Of long experience in dealing with the various moods of his employer, Chamberlain retired and did precisely what he had done on previous occasions. That is to say, he wrote a short editorial in such a vigorous style, that

he thought Mr. Bennett would see at once that it was impossible and decide not to cable it to America. Indeed, it was quite possible that he might forget all about it by nightfall. That evening he called as requested and tried to lead the conversation into safe and peaceful channels, but, with a keen look in his eye, his chief inquired if he had followed his directions, and the document was unwillingly produced and read aloud. It was as strong as a skilled pen could make it and was headed, "To Hell with the Pope!" which Mr. Bennett pronounced admirable. Such phrases as, "Tear down the monasteries!" "Drive out the monks!" and "Let us have no politics from Rome!" proved vastly pleasing to the listener.

"Now, Sam," he said, as the recital came to a close, "you've fooled me many times before, but you're not going to do it this time. We'll cable this to-night."

"Of course we will!" exclaimed Sam, reaching for his hat. "I'll take it to the cable office at once."

"No, you won't," said the other, "we'll go down there together and I'll see this thing on its way myself."

Mr. Bennett turned in the message with his own hand, but the moment his secretary could escape from him he rushed back to the office in the hope of intercepting it; but to do this he was obliged to call upon the chief of the cable service at his home and to obtain his written order for its cancellation.

Not until ten days later, during which time he carried the editorial in his pocket, was Sam summoned to the presence of his chief, whom he found in bed, recovering from his potations. Almost the first thing he said was:

"Didn't we send an editorial on the Catholic Church to New York a few days ago?"

"Well," replied the other as he handed it over, "I thought it wasn't strong enough so I got it back from the operator with a view to letting you read it over again quite carefully."

Bennett read the caption and a few sentences and his face turned as white as the pillow on which it lay. He made no comment at the moment but a week later, when he and his secretary were out driving, he stopped at a jewelry store and purchased a beautiful cats-eye ring which he placed on the finger of the man who had saved him from the consequences of his own drunken folly.

I did not know Bennett in the Eighties, but toward the close of his life, when I became the literary editor and one of the editorial writers of the *Herald,* I came to know him quite well. I believe him to have been one of the really great journalists of this country, for although the *Herald* was founded by his father, a struggling man, to the son, born and reared in luxury, fell the more difficult task of keeping it in the lead for a great many years. It has often been said that his long residence abroad rendered Mr. Bennett indifferent to the claims of his own country but I recall one letter, written to a member of his staff, which reveals him in a different light. He said: "My attitude on foreign matters, which is often called changeable, and is, I believe, frequently misunderstood, is simply this. If a nation is friendly to this country, I wish the *Herald* to be friendly to that nation, but if a nation shows an unfriendly policy, I wish the paper to adopt an unfriendly

tone. This may or may not be patriotism but it is the course which I wish the *Herald* to follow."

Mr. Bennett's knowledge of foreign affairs was very great, owing not only to his continued residence in Europe but also to the precept and example of his father who was one of the first American journalists to devote much attention to what went on in London and Paris. The younger Bennett had long detested the German Emperor and believed that he had sinister designs, not only on his immediate neighbors, but also on this country, so that the breaking out of the Great War did not take him by surprise. By this time, unfortunately, parsimony had taken possession of his soul and he proceeded to economize in cable tolls instead of increasing the service. He remained in Paris throughout the war and continued to print the *Paris Herald* regularly, although all the other papers in the English tongue had stopped. One of his editors was instructed to stick pins in a map to indicate the position of the invading army, and this duty he performed daily until the Germans were within fourteen miles of Paris when, with trembling fingers, he stuck the pins in for the last time and fled to England, taking most of his staff with him. But it never occurred to his gallant employer to quit his post. His carriages and automobiles had been commandeered, but he walked to his office every day, and, with what assistance he could obtain, continued to print his paper until the tide was turned at the Marne. He was at this time, I believe, in his seventy-third year, and it was then that he married.

The frugal policies to which I have alluded did not go unnoticed in the New York office. Shortly after the

beginning of the war, one of our editors returned from a prolonged stay in Paris and, to my inquiry: "How did you leave the Commodore?" made solemn answer: "He's dead." And then added: "The old drunken, enterprising, money-spending Jim Bennett is dead. In his place has come a sober Scotch miser."

But I like to remember Mr. Bennett as I first knew him, distinguished in person, courteous in manner and keenly alive to the interests of his paper. I was often asked sneeringly if he paid any attention to the *Herald* and to this I have made answer that once he cabled me from Ceylon ordering an editorial on a local matter, and that on another occasion, just as I had begun to write something about a wealthy New Yorker, then prominently before the public, a cable message was placed on my desk, suggesting that very topic. He never allowed any editorial comment on a case while it was before the courts nor the coloring of news by editorial opinion.

CHAPTER XV

IN speaking of Mr. Dana as the leading journalist of his time, we should remember that he had enjoyed a long training under Horace Greeley, who brought his career to a close when he became a candidate for the Presidency. Greeley had a tremendous personal following because he had strong convictions and expressed himself with a vigor that frequently became vituperation. He was a man of advanced ideas, and, like others of his kind, the subject of much ridicule. And yet he was a strong advocate of teetotalism and Woman Suffrage, and long before the war he outlined a scheme for filling in the Jersey marshes with the ashes and refuse from New York so that a manufacturing city might be built on what is now a wide stretch of waste land. The scheme is perfectly feasible and one that would do much to rid New Jersey of the mosquito pest with which its fame is closely associated.

There has been one man in New York in my time who had the makings of a very great journalist and I have often regretted that he did not become the founder or owner of a daily newspaper. Abram S. Hewitt was a man of strong convictions and sterling integrity, the possessor of a splendid brain which he turned to useful account, not only for his own benefit, but for that of

the public as well. His labors in behalf of Cooper Union and his generous donations to that most useful of all our public institutions left the city immeasurably indebted to him. He was intensely patriotic, had a thorough knowledge of national affairs and politics and understood the city of New York and its people as few men have understood them. That the bugaboo of unpopularity had no terrors for him was proved more than once, never more so than when he sat by the side of Richard Croker when that man, then a ward heeler and rough and tumble fighter, was arraigned for murder. It was no small thing for a man of Mr. Hewitt's social and commercial standing to do and years afterward the real perpetrator of the crime confessed his guilt.

His training as a lawyer, his scholarship and fine literary taste would have proved invaluable to him in the vocation that I have assigned to him and he was, moreover, just enough of a "crank"—a term often fittingly applied to one strong enough to turn the dull current of public opinion from its deeply rutted course, and wise enough to direct it into more useful channels—just enough of a "crank" to infuse his columns with something of the lively and unexpected interest that makes for good reading.

Dramatic journalism, which seems to be extinct now, was represented by two weeklies of importance at this time, the *Dramatic News,* edited by Charles A. Byrne, and the *Mirror,* controlled by Harrison Grey Fiske, now a well-known theatrical manager. The last-named was the more decent and dignified organ of the two, while the *News* was blackguardly to the point of libel. Its

editor and writers excelled in the arts of vituperation and there was one member of its staff whose talents should have been employed for a much better purpose. This was Archie Gordon, a Scotchman of genuine wit and a satirist of great power. He was a humorist, too, and personally good-natured, like all true satirists and a bohemian who might have flourished in the days of Dick Steele.

When Chicago secured the World's Fair, Mr. Dana, who had set forth the claims of New York with his customary skill and vigor, despatched Gordon to the Windy City with instructions to write a page description of it in his most venomous style and the account thus written is still considered as one of the great classics of newspaperdom, equalling Amos J. Cummings' page story of the career of George Leonidas Leslie, the criminal whose body was found in the Westchester woods, which was printed in the *Sun* in the early spring of 1879.

I recall a single paragraph from Gordon's pen which may serve as a sample of his vituperative skill, employed, in this case, to remind a delinquent of his indebtedness to the *Dramatic News:*

"Some time ago a man who had previously led a blameless life announced his intention of harassing the Island of Jamaica with a company to include Barton Hill. Mark the quick vengeance of heaven! No sooner had he made known this fell purpose than a woman he had never seen in his life had him arrested for breach of promise and he is now languishing in jail while the inhabitants of Jamaica are giving devout thanks to the Lord for their timely deliverance."

I have always been strong for Scotch humor, despite the ancient tradition to the contrary, and Archie Gordon possessed an abundance of it as well as the capacity for enjoying his own jokes, which, as Bret Harte has remarked, is a test of the true humorist. The following story he related to me the last time I saw him and on the same occasion with equal cheerfulness he told me that he had but a few weeks more to live, a prophecy that came true.

At this time there resided on the Bowery one Professor Corbett, the proprietor of the Van Dyke House, a Belgian of distinguished appearance who always dressed well and had his ample gray beard trimmed by Poujol, the "learned French barber," whom the *Sun* made locally famous. He also filled an honored niche in Cornetist Levy's gallery of fathers-in-law. Corbett was likewise a playwright and had been one of the first manipulators of the chicken incubator in this country. His neatly engraved visiting card bore the line, "Professor of Gallinoculture." This card he handed to Gordon one night when the latter, always of a social turn, scraped acquaintance with him in a public resort. Quick to recognize the meaning of the term and delighting to roll it under his tongue, Corbett's new friend exclaimed at once: "Ah, that is a science that has always interested me!" Then remembering, as he told me, that his brother-in-law, a tall, solemn, slab-sided Scotchman, had a dozen mangy-looking hens running about his yard, he added: "Of course you know my brother-in-law, Professor Robertson, the well-known expert in Gallinoculture?"

Corbett had never heard of him and Archie continued: "Why he is a graduate of the College of Gallinoculture in Edinburgh, and when he attended the Congress of Gallinoculturists in Glasgow, three years ago, the Mayor of the city and the Common Council came to the station in their robes of office to meet him and he was chosen by all the other Gallinoculturists to preside at their Congress."

"It is strange that I have never heard of him," said the other, "but I should like to meet him; give him my card when you see him next and perhaps we can arrange a meeting."

"I'm sure he would be delighted," said Gordon. "He simply lives for Gallinoculture and his home in Montclair is the favorite place of rendezvous for all the leading Gallinoculturists in New Jersey."

Not until a month later did Archie enter the same resort, and as he passed the threshold Corbett, who had apparently been waiting for him all that time, came forward and pounced upon him saying eagerly: "*Eh bien!* That brother-in-law of yours! I have written to him several times but received no answer. Is he afraid to hold a conference with me?"

Gordon had forgotten all about their previous conversation and it took him half a minute to recall it; then he responded: "Of course I gave him your card but he seemed rather annoyed at the thought that there was a Gallinoculturist in New York of the Belgian school and I never meet him that he does not speak in the most disparaging manner of the Belgian Gallinoculturists and the sort of Gallinoculture that they practice. He's holding

a conference of New Jersey Gallinoculturists at his home in Montclair, this very evening, and I've no doubt that they are all engaged in abusing you and agreeing that your method of bringing chickens into the world is entirely obsolete and a disgrace to the noble profession of Gallinoculture."

A week later Archie met his brother-in-law and by mere chance recalled his meetings with Corbett and determined to sound him. He spoke of eggs, then of chickens and finally brought in the term Gallinoculture, at which a gleam of intelligence came into the other's eyes and he said, "What's that long word?"

"Gallinoculture," rejoined Gordon. "Why do you ask?"

"There's a crazy sort of fellow been writing me letters lately all about that and I didn't know what in the Devil he meant. A week ago he had the cheek to call upon me and he seemed very angry at something."

"Yes?" said Archie interrogatively, "what did you say to him?"

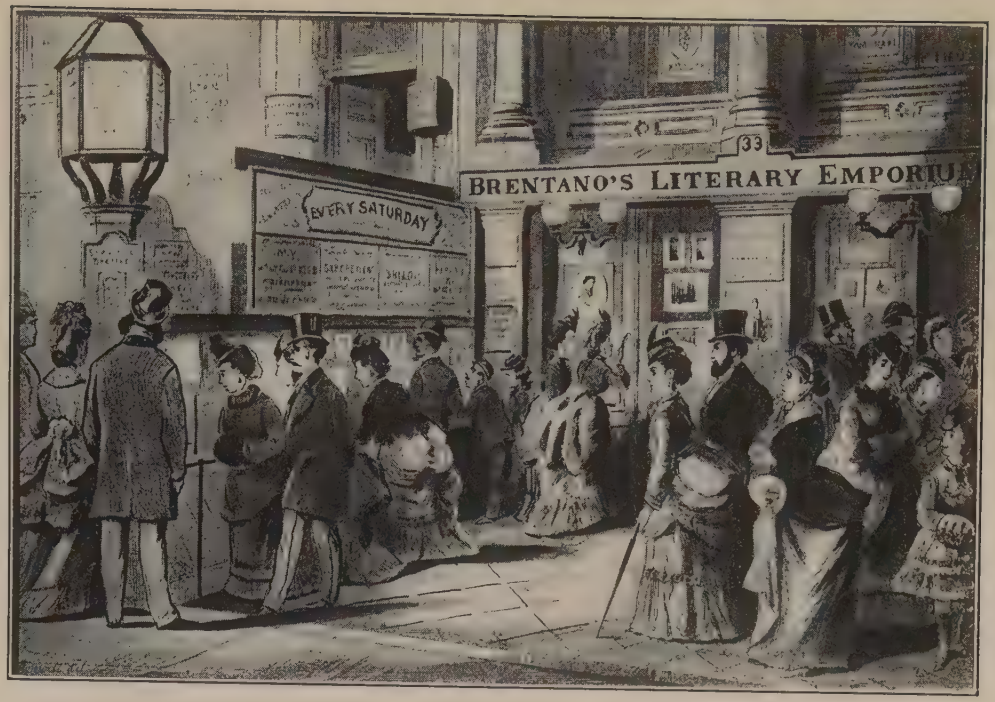
"I didn't say anything. I just pushed him downstairs," said the brother-in-law.

The dramatic profession lived in daily terror of the attacks made on them by Byrne and Gordon in the *Dramatic News,* which were often grossly personal and especially venomous in the case of a mummer who had failed to pay for his advertisement. The paper appeared on the stands at eleven o'clock every Thursday morning and those distributing agencies in the neighborhood of Union Square were instantly surrounded by players eager to see who "gets it this time." In addition to these two

journals there was the *Clipper,* still in existence and devoted largely to circus and variety.

During the Seventies and Eighties Brentano's on Union Square enjoyed a vogue as a literary place of rendezvous not unlike that of "The Old Corner Bookstore," in Boston, during its lifetime. It was on the direct route between the downtown business section and the residential quarter; many of the principal publishing houses were situated near by and literary men and artists were scattered about the neighborhood as far south as Washington Square. One could find here at any time not only men and women of artistic callings but also lovers of books and collectors thereof.

The original Brentano had emigrated from Italy at a very early age and begun life here as a newsboy. Because of his physical deformity, the landlord had permitted him to sell papers in front of his New York Hotel and here he built up a good trade, for he was always alert, cheerful and anxious to please his customers. When the time came for the much-heralded Heenan-Sayres prize-fight in England, young Brentano exhibited a foresight far beyond that of any of his competitors by ordering in advance from London a large number of newspapers containing full accounts of the combat. There was no cable in those days and when the steamer containing news of the result arrived, Brentano was at the dock for his bundles of papers and was selling them for a dollar apiece before the day closed. In this manner he laid the foundation of the present extensive business that bears his name.



Brentano's Bookstore at No. 33 Union Square. The Costumes, One of Which Recalls the Grecian Bend of an Earlier Date, are of the Seventies

During the Eighties, by which time he was beginning to feel his age, he retired and handed over his store to his three nephews, August, Simon and Arthur, the last-named of whom still survives and is manager of the house. The elder Brentano announced his intention of making a tour of the world and for a time busied himself with farewells to the many well-known citizens whom he numbered among his friends. He departed with everyone's good wishes for an extended tour but got no further than Montreal, for the spell of New York was too strong for him to resist and he returned to occupy the cashier's desk in the establishment that he had founded and there he remained until the day of his death.

A contemporary of mine on the green turf of Broadway during the Eighties was an individual who, through his lifelong practice of never doing anything for any one but himself, came to be widely known as "Glorious, Good-hearted Gus." His redeeming trait was a sense of humor which found frequent expression in practical jokes at the expense of persons unfamiliar with urban ways whom he always had in tow. I recall two instances in which his jocose efforts seem to have recoiled on himself.

While the Eden Musée was in process of construction, Gus made the acquaintance of one of the foreign directors of that enterprise and easily persuaded him that he was himself a person of such importance as to warrant the placing of his effigy in wax in that hall of wonders. Not until the figure was finished was the true

status of Gus made known to the exhibitors and then, rather than have their work wasted, they set it up in the lobby as a pickpocket.

Gus had a simple-minded German friend who, soon after his arrival here, was seized with a desire to attend a large ball given by the Vanderbilts. "I'll fix you all right," said his cicerone, and the credulous one started for the scene of revelry bearing a note of introduction which he was assured would gain him immediate entrance, and leaving behind him a promise to report his experiences later in the evening. He returned to find Gus and one or two of his familiars awaiting his arrival at the saloon agreed upon as a rendezvous.

"Talk about these American aristocrats being proud and snobbish, they're nothing of the kind!" cried the German delightedly. "I never was better treated in my life. When I rang the bell and showed my card I was told to go to another door, right underneath. There I met a gentleman in a dress suit, probably Mr. Vanderbilt himself, and he set me down to a grand supper and what's more when I came away he gave me a bottle of champagne—here it is—this paté and all these grapes." These delicacies he produced from the ample pocket of his overcoat and wound up his account by inviting everybody to have a drink, thus defying the usual code of German etiquette.

CHAPTER XVI

ALTHOUGH the Nineties is not yet sufficiently remote to enjoy the importance of a distinct historical period now ascribed to the Eighties, it nevertheless left its mark upon the annals of the town. It was then that Mr. Hearst appeared in Park Row and by his contest with Mr. Pulitzer over the privilege of printing the "Yellow Kid" pictures fastened upon their school of journalism the term "yellow." It was then, too, that E. W. Bok entered the literary field and Eleanor Duse made a profound impression on the playgoing public. Comic opera began to degenerate into musical comedy and the science of publicity extended its activities into many new fields.

It is at the very dawn of this tenth decade that the historian who has the good sense to concern himself with events of apparent insignificance but real importance will note the appearance on the horizon of Mr. Ward McAllister, who had previously stirred up an amazing local tempest by a chance remark about the four hundred persons composing New York society. An eager press seized upon the idea of a society properly catalogued, and printed lists of the "Four Hundred," to be later amplified for the advancement of the socially ambitious. Fashion of earlier days shunned rather than courted newspaper notoriety, and in the printed accounts

of the ball given to the Prince of Wales in 1861 the dresses were fully described but their wearers were indicated only by initials. The *Sun* for many years printed in its Sunday edition a single column in which were chronicled, in a dignified manner, the activities of a very small group of fashionable families. But under the new dispensation, the feminine element of the public began to take a feverish interest in the affairs of the new peerage, an interest that developed into something like hysteria when the art of portraiture through the cheap medium of photo-engraving lent its aid to the good work. Every boarding-house resounded with discussions as to who was and who was not the absolute leader of society and a fashionable wedding was certain to crowd the sidewalks opposite the church with throngs of eager lookers-on. I dare say that the majority of these spectators were better informed in regard to the movements of society and its migrations between New York and Newport than were those reared within the golden gates.

I have not a word to say against fashionable society and I am always suspicious of those who blatantly denounce it. He who has known what it is to sit before a bank of flowers with an attractive woman on his left, and sometimes another of like charm on his right, with terrapin on his plate and a champagne glass, as often refilled as emptied, within easy reach of his hand, should be careful not to cut himself off from the delights to come by foolish utterances.

But I do object to the persistent misrepresentation of society by press-agents—there is no telephone bell in a

newspaper office that rings as frequently as does that on the society editor's desk—and on the stage. It is because of all this that no foreigner living, unless it be Lord Bryce, understands the social structure of our nation.

In the excellent work of misrepresenting the fashionable society of our metropolis, as well as its other strata, the rubberneck coach, dating from 1905, has ably seconded that of the forces I have named, and supplanted the out-of-town correspondent of an earlier period as a medium for the dissemination of false information. The megaphone man is to a certain extent responsible for the distorted views of more than one phase of life indelibly engraved on the rubberneck mind. I have long wished to take a trip on one of those vehicles of mendacious propaganda, partly for my own amusement and partly in order to hear what the megaphone man had to say. Nothing but the fear of recognition has dissuaded me. And while these tours of exploration through the fashionable quarters of the city have had no effect on the inhabitants thereof, they have materially influenced certain quarters much further downtown. Rubbernecks share with sociological students a frenzied delight in scenes of vice and horror, and as New York contains but few of such nowadays, the establishment of fake opium joints, fake dens of vice and fake bad men and quaint characters has become a distinct industry of the slums. As an illustration of the manner in which those journeying along Fifth Avenue are regaled with misleading statements, I will relate an anecdote concerning three friends of mine who were seated one day in a window of the Knickerbocker Club when the coach went by.

All three were in the state known as "stony broke"; all were posted on the club bulletin as delinquents and therefore entitled to no further credit at the bar. Nor did the combined resources of all three equal the cost of a round of drinks. It will probably surprise many persons to learn that three of those demigods of fiction, "clubmen," can be reduced to such straits.

Seated in melancholy silence the three noted the approach of the rubberneck coach and as it passed they saw the megaphone man direct the gaze of his open-mouthed passengers to the window in which they sat and heard his strident cry of "On your right the Knickerbocker Club! Every member a millionaire!"

On the stage social delusion runs riot. In every property-room there may be found on the same shelf with the cups from which toasts are drunk in phantom wine, the gilt lorgnettes used by the actress cast for the "society leader" in subtle delineation of the finer shadings of the rôle. No other member of the company is permitted to handle this precious article. The actor who tries to procure it in order to delineate the finer shadings of the character of a blacksmith or faithful and attached servitor would get his two weeks' notice on the spot. Yet its employment in his hands would not be more absurd than it is in those to which it is consecrated by immemorial custom. Through this ear-mark of distinction, the "society leader" gazes at the wedding guests with an air of insufferable insolence that would make her assumption of "leadership" a joke in any drawing-room in the town.

In viewing such a preposterous performance I find it

August Brentano, Founder of the Famous Book-selling Firm That Bears His Name

John Fiske, Eminent Historian and Philosopher

pleasant to recall the gracious sweetness with which Mrs. Gilbert used to enhance the charm and beauty of the Daly productions when cast for the part of a well-bred woman of society.

Socially inconspicuous as I am—I have never been one of fashion's spoiled darlings—I am certain that the most withering looks would pierce me through that property-room medium of scorn, yet never but once in my life have I found myself in a company that treated me with undisguised contumely. That was at the ball given during my stay at Coney Island by the employees of a railroad running between that resort and New York, an annual revel that never failed to bring out the conservative and exclusive elements composing what I called, but they did not, the Island's Faubourg Saint Germain. To this festival of stately decorum came only the elect. Prominent conductors employed on other lines of suburban traffic, two or three bar-tenders who were known to be above their business and a local plumber noted for his *savoir faire* vied with one another in their attentions to the refined daughters of the leading grocer, the reserved niece of the eminent scientist who practiced phrenology in a tent and the handsomely attired progeny of the collector for the brewery. In all that gay throng I was perhaps the only person who had ever crossed the threshold of a first-class house, except to carry in a trunk or piano, and yet I was made to feel that I was an outsider for I was nothing but a reporter, and reporters are seldom popular except when useful. Nor did those ladies require lorgnettes with which to express their scorn.

One of the evil results of the prominence attained by a great many unworthy persons is the development of the male society-pusher, by which I mean a man who tries all sorts of tricks and devices to thrust himself into a circle which he acknowledges to be above his own and into which it has not pleased God to call him. I have noted the habits of these pushers for many years and have reached the conclusion that each is a "wrong 'un" in other and more serious respects. He is very different from the female of his species, for a yearning after social position is pardonable in a woman, to whom it means much more than to a man, and who has not infrequently the future of her children in mind while she pursues her innocent tactics. Each sex has its own weakness and must be judged accordingly, and what is pardonable in one is inexcusable in the other. For example, a man may drink too much at an evening party and subsequently square himself by a propitiatory offering of flowers to his hostess or the purchase of tickets for a distressing concert by amateurs. In certain of the western cities a more liberal and discerning code distinguishes between those whose offense might be regarded as a tribute to the generous hospitality of the house and those guilty of the more heinous crime of "bringing their load with them." But in a woman, inebriety, under any conditions, is regarded as a serious offence and in like manner do I regard society pushing on the part of the male.

Even at this late day I would gladly push my way into company accredited by common repute with a social standing superior to my own were it not for my dread

of encountering the sort of snub that only woman's lips can administer, or the glance of withering contempt with which I have seen an unbidden guest regarded. I have, however, attended—never, I am proud to say, save by invitation—festivities in many social strata and have not yet discovered which represented the upper and which the lower crust of society.

Looking back over many years my memory lights gladly on several high spots of social diversion. I recall those parties of early childhood at which I gorged myself unrebuked on ice cream and strawberries, and later the boarding school feasts given surreptitiously after we were all supposed to be asleep, at a table noiselessly spread by a barefoot committee and with windows carefully draped with blankets to prevent a tell-tale light. Coming down to more recent years I remember fishing trips to Nova Scotia, as the guest of my friend, E. K. Spinney of Yarmouth, and Hector Sutherland of New Glasgow. Those excursions yielded me fewer fish and more genuine enjoyment than came to any other members of the party, for the lakes, the woods, the salt air sifted through miles of resinous forests were an old story to them and to me delightfully fresh and novel.

It was in the rooms of the Century Club in Fifteenth Street which I often visited with my father, that I met some of the finest company that I have ever known, for the club then held a high position as the gathering place of men of intellectual, literary and artistic distinction. It was there that I heard Clarence King talk as I have never heard any one else talk before or since. He could take the most commonplace topic and blow it into a suc-

cession of many-colored bubbles as a child blows soap-suds or a glass-blower fashions his material. Another man of wit in the Century group and whom I afterward knew quite well, was F. F. Marbury, who excelled in the art of saying the most witty and amusing things with a perfectly grave face. On one occasion a Cockney Englishman had contrived to make himself one of a little group of Centurions whom he was "deah boying" in a rather familiar strain and without due regard for his aspirates. "There was a big hentail on the land," he explained in the course of a rather tedious narrative, and then interjected, "but you don't know anything about the hentail in this country, I believe?"

"No," rejoined Marbury promptly, "we don't know anything about the hentail but we know all about the cocktail."

Another extremely interesting talker whom I recall was Mr. Augustine Smith, who knew the history of New York backwards, to use a familiar phrase, and was rich in anecdotal lore concerning every one of the town's best known families.

The most beautiful evening party I ever attended was given in one of the finest of the older New York houses and was arranged to illustrate various schools of song. Groups of men and women, appropriately costumed, came up the broad marble stair case, singing as they came to the accompaniment of an orchestra stationed on the upper landing, whence they marched, still singing, through the reception and drawing-rooms where the guests were assembled. One of these groups consisted of men in pink coats who sang old English hunting

songs, and another composed of young men and women, dressed in Neapolitan costume, sang Italian folk songs. All these singers had been carefully trained and appropriately costumed and the whole thing was marvelously beautiful and devoid of the slovenliness that marks so many amateur efforts.

I have always found great delight in theatrical parties and two or three of these I recall with pleasure. I was the only literary man invited to the silver wedding of Tony Pastor in Elmhurst, Long Island, where many popular entertainers then had their homes. It was a gathering that would have delighted the soul of any veteran playgoer who knew and loved the variety stage. Peter F. Dailey was there and I heard Maggie Cline singing, "Throw him down, McCluskey," as I crossed the threshold. Evans of "Evans and Hoey" was there, as was Edgar Smith, the librettist, and wife, and the Russell Brothers (the neat Irish chamber-maids of variety renown), Hallen and Hart, John T. Kelly, considered, apart from what he can do on the stage, the best "dressing-room actor" in the profession, and scores of others. A continuous performance was given by some of the best variety talent in the country from the beginning of the revel until the last of the guests started homeward on the trolley car.

Another professional evening that I remember was a New Year's Eve party given by Mrs. McKee Rankin in her apartment on Broadway, and it proved so successful, that I commend it to the attention of those hostesses who wish to entertain their friends in a novel fashion and whose visiting lists contain men and women of suffi-

cient wit and sparkle to carry the affair through in the proper spirit. Mrs. Rankin had arranged that the old year should be tried before judge and jury, prosecuted by one lawyer and defended by another, and that the different guests should be summoned before this tribunal as witnesses to testify as to what the old year had done for them or what it had left undone. A stuffed figure that bore a suspicious resemblance to McKee Rankin, with whom our hostess was then at odds, typified the dying year and was propped up in what was supposed to be the prisoner's box. One after another the guests were called upon to give their testimony and many were the amusing remarks and tilts of wit between the opposing counsel. I think that Sidney Drew, Mrs. Rankin's son-in-law, was the judge and Marshall P. Wilder one of the legal advocates. Ethel Barrymore was there—she was then a very young girl—and I remember that she contributed her share to the entertainment by singing and playing most delightfully. Among the others present were the "Holland boys," two bright-faced lads of about fifty-seven; Mrs. John Chamberlain, of previous dramatic renown; and Mrs. Rankin's lovely daughter Phyllis, who later gained fame here and in London in *The Belle of New York*. The final verdict of the jury was "guilty" and the sentence of the judge was that the old year should be thrown out. So at the very stroke of midnight the stuffed figure was hurled through the window to the court below—the captain of the precinct had refused to allow it to be thrown into Broadway for fear of a riot—and at the same instant Mrs. Sidney Drew appeared bear-

Miss Cissy Loftus, Unsurpassed as an Imitator

Miss Phyllis Rankin, in "The Belle of New York"

ing in her arms her infant daughter to whose health, as a symbol of the new year, all drank.

I have also spent many merry evenings in the early Eighties in the rooms in Ninth Street, where Eleanor Carey, a most attractive member of the Union Square Company, had her home. She entertained a good many members of the English musical comedy companies then playing in New York and her very small boy used to watch these entertainers with delight until sleep overcame him and he was put to bed in the back parlor while the revels ceased for a moment, to be resumed as soon as he was completely lost to the world. Other evenings I have spent in the home of George Arliss and in that of Fay Templeton and never in either case without much enjoyment. I recall also more than one party given by David Belasco, on Sunday evenings, on the stage of his theatre. Taken, all in all, my associations with players have been extremely agreeable and socially I rank them very high in my wide acquaintance.

As already related it was Steele Mackaye who set the ball of theatrical finance rolling at the beginning of the Eighties, and it was the same hand that gave it fresh impetus at the very dawn of the succeeding decade. No sooner was it decided that Chicago should have the World's Fair than this past master of high finance started for that city carrying up his sleeve a weapon secretly fashioned in his own verbal armory. On his arrival he prepared a banquet to which he invited many wealthy citizens, including those who had never spent a cent in the public interest without first ascertaining what there was "into it" for themselves. With his imposing

presence, mobile actor-face, rolling eyes and sonorous voice, their host held them helpless in the clutches of his oratory as he unfolded his scheme for a gigantic place of amusement which should not only place the Windy City on the map as the Athens of the mid-west, but also yield fabulous profits to its projectors.

As every one on the New Jersey coast knows, there is a moment in the life of a crab when it behooves him to hide himself in the sand and there remain during the brief space of time that lies between the casting off of his old shell and the hardening of a new one, a process that leaves him for a time a "shedder" and at the mercy of the crabber's net. Not until his eloquence had melted the shell of distrust from his guests and before their skins had begun to harden against his wiles did Mr. Mackaye draw his concealed weapon from the sleeve of his vocabulary and swoop down upon them with it upon his lips. That weapon was the word "Spectatorium," and as it came booming forth on splendid waves of sound from his powerful lungs, like a genie released from its bottle, the defenceless "shedders," to use a sporting term, "took the count."

Exactly how much he obtained for a project that was never completed and whose skeleton was ultimately sold as scrap iron for a few thousand dollars, is now a bitter corroding memory in the minds of those who contributed and whose lips refuse to mention the sum. The world has always paid willing tribute to its orators and there are many thoughtful men who contend that the gaunt and rusty bones of the "Spectatorium" should have been left standing to the eternal glory of Steele Mackaye, and

that to the single word to which it owed its creation should be accorded a place in the national lexicon side by side with Daniel Webster's superb metaphor in his eulogy of Alexander Hamilton. I am opposed to this plan and also to the proposal to mark with a brass plate the exact spot on which the silver-tongued newspaper agent, Mr. Charles M. Palmer, sold the *New York Daily News* to Frank A. Munsey. No visible reminder of these occurrences should be allowed to stay the hand of one about to redistribute his swollen fortune. Better the silence of oblivion *pour encourager les autres.*

In a previous chapter I have spoken of players whose success was due largely to competent management and adroit press-work, and it is therefore with pleasure that I relate the story of one who succeeded without any press-work at all, and gained instant and substantial recognition through sheer force of genius.

I was then on terms of amity with the Rosenfeld Brothers, Viennese managers who had brought to this country the Lilliputian Company, the most remarkable group of dwarfs ever seen here. They seemed anxious to present other foreign attractions in New York and one day they told me that they had signed with the greatest of European actresses for an American tour and asked if I would undertake her press-work.

I had never heard of her before and felt that the task of creating an American reputation for her out of whole cloth would be difficult, if not impossible. Nor had I any faith in stars, no matter how gifted, playing in an alien tongue, so I inquired rather dubiously what there was to say about her in advance of her début.

I never knew how many Rosenfelds there were—whenever I thought I had them all counted two more would enter the room—but they were sufficiently numerous to form an effective chorus and now they lifted their voices in an impressive shout:

"You can say anything you like about her and it will be less than true! She is the greatest artist in all Europe and the superior even of Bernhardt. In Italy she is the idol of the people and when she leaves by the stage door after the performance the police have to be called out to prevent a riot. You can get the *Herald* to print notices saying all this and more too, and then when they see her on the stage they will thank you for having given them the news before the other papers."

But I was fearful that the *Herald* would be likely to reserve its judgment until after the lady's début, so I declined the job and when they suggested interviews as the next best means of awakening popular interest a brilliant idea entered my head and I told them that interviews were played out and they might possibly arouse some enthusiasm for their star by having her refuse to receive any reporters, though in my secret heart I doubted if any actress would consent to forego the time-honored privilege of talking about herself. Whether or no my counsel had any result I never learned, but I do know that the star positively refused to be interviewed and that her unheard-of reticence was supplemented by paragraphs stating that her managers were unable to hold converse with her except through the keyhole of her door.

And so it came to pass that Eleanora Duse came before

ELEONORA DUSE, WHO CONQUERED NEW YORK IN A SINGLE NIGHT

us without a word of preliminary puffing on a stage barren of costly accessories—I think she had paper scenery—and conquered New York in a single night. Before the fall of the curtain that memorable night in January, 1893, I knew that all that the Rosenfelds had said about her was true. Maturer judgment tells me that no dramatic fire equal to hers has flashed across our vision since Rachel's ill-starred tour. A true child of the theatre, with the blood of player-folk in her veins she had been carefully trained by her parents and lived only that she might act. Her first season here was tremendously successful but on her return to Italy she fell under the influence of the poet who was also a writer of plays that Americans did not care to see, so that when she came a second time she attracted but slim audiences and could earn only meagre royalties for her lover. Nevertheless her single performance of *Magda* at the Metropolitan Opera House drew an assembly that taxed the capacity of the building.

As John Hollingshead "kept alight the sacred lamp of burlesque" in London, so did George Edwardes keep alive the still more sacred and consuming flame of feminine beauty in New York. His London Gaiety Theatre Burlesque Company appeared for the first time at the Manhattan Theatre at the close of the ninth decade in *Monte Cristo, Jr.,* followed a month later by *Miss Esmeralda,* the two presenting to the New York public that delightful comedian, Fred Leslie, and such attractive women as Nellie Farren, Marian Hood, Letty Lind and Sylvia Grey. Later Miss Cissie Fitzgerald appeared under the same management.

In the minds of countless playgoers the Casino is associated with much feminine talent and beauty. I shall always remember the performance of that exquisite actress, Miss Sadie Martinot, as Nanon in the opera of that name. And still more vividly do I recall the dainty beauty of Phyllis Rankin in *The Belle of New York.* Marie Tempest played here, too, and so did Lillian Russell, Pauline Hall, Sylvia Gerrish, Marian Manola, Lotta Faust, Edna May, Marie Cahill, Della Fox, Christie MacDonald, and innumerable other possessors of beauty or talent or both.

How many of us recall the "Cork Room" situated under the stage of Koster and Bial's and the entertainers who made the place popular? Madge Lessing was one of these and so was Georgie Parker, now the widow of a well known newspaper man. Christine Blessing, Jenny Joyce and Josie Gregory are also well remembered. Space does not admit of a full discussion of such a wide and intricate theme as the attractive women of the New York stage.

I recall one occasion on which I displayed a foresight quite unusual with me. Blakeley Hall asked me to review a new piece called *L'Oncle Celestin,* and afterward inquired rather disapprovingly why I had devoted so much of my space to a specialty which had received but scant praise from the other critics who had confined their attention to the piece itself. To this I made answer that *L'Oncle Celestin* would be forgotten in a very short time but that the specialty and the performer who introduced it would be talked of for many a day to come. But even my perspicacity, unusual as it was, did not show

me that Loie Fuller and her extraordinary use of lights and draperies were destined to achieve world-wide renown.

It was during the Nineties that I joined two clubs, both of which remain pleasantly in my memory. I was one of a small group of artists and writers who founded the "Cloister" in 1894, establishing ourselves in a building in Clinton Place which became later the scene of much festivity. Our premises consisted of two fine drawing-rooms in an old-fashioned brick residence, a kitchen and front basement room and a back yard in which we dined during the summer. The initiation fee was ten dollars and when we had assembled a sufficient number of members and extracted that amount from each one we paid a month's rent of seventy-five dollars, purchased a few tables and chairs and called a meeting to discuss permanent operations. The balance of the sum was judiciously invested by the treasurer, Mr. H. L. Wilson, in refreshments contained in bottles bearing labels that fully commanded our confidence. Warned by the histories of previous literary and artistic clubs we resolved then and there not to incur any debt and it was this wise financial policy that gave to the club the prosperity it enjoyed for a few years.

Among our earliest members were Edward W. Townsend, the author of the "Chimmie Fadden" sketches and subsequently a member of Congress and Postmaster of Montclair; Alfred Q. Collins, a gifted portrait painter; Robert W. Chambers, Reginald Birch, Emil Carlsen, now well known as an artist; John G. Dater, a financial writer on the *Herald;* and H. C. Bunner, W. C. Gibson, Frank

M. Hutchins, Charles J. Taylor and R. K. Munkittrick, all of the *Puck* staff. Our caterer was a Frenchman whose restaurant we had often frequented and we arranged with him to furnish coal and gas for his kitchen and, if I remember aright, living quarters for himself and family on the top floor. In return for this he was to supply a good dinner for half a dollar, including wine, and make what he could out of our not inconsiderable bar trade. No license was required then, or if there was we managed to evade it, and whenever our caterer showed signs of discontent and complained of the high price of food stuffs we used to encourage him by drinking bouts in which every one was urged to do his best. Some of us had stronger heads than others and not infrequently it became necessary for a committee of the first-named to lead some weaker brother to Broadway and hoist him aboard his homeward car. There were even nights when the committee bore the fallen one to his home, placed him on the door-mat, rang the bell and then fled.

One feature in the club that proved very successful was our admission to the dining-room of ladies, a privilege that, to my knowledge, was never abused. So long as we remained in our original quarters and with our earliest caterer in the kitchen, the Cloister thrived, but when we rented an entire house in the theatrical district its decline set in.

The other club to which I have referred never had a home and was merely a group of men who dined together two or three times during the winter. In that group were Theodore Roosevelt, John J. Chapman, Prescott Hall Butler, Thomas Hastings, James B. Ludlow, Robert

Bridges, A. Longfellow of Boston and Henry W. Poor. It was an inconspicuous affair that never courted publicity and was content to eat a modest dinner in one of Muschenheim's private rooms and to regale itself with beer and whiskey. Its occasional gatherings were extremely agreeable, and even the busiest of its members usually found time to attend. We had neither officers nor rules and we took turns in arranging the meetings. I never knew why it ceased to exist while so many dreary institutions continued to flourish.

Mr. Poor, whom I knew well for many years, was distinctly a man of parts. He amassed a large fortune in Wall Street and built a splendid house on the site of the old Cyrus and David Dudley Field residences at the corner of Gramercy Park and Lexington Avenue. He also owned a house in Tuxedo Park and another on the Island of Capri and was a man of wide reading and cultivated literary taste. In the selection of poems for the anthology to which I have referred in a previous chapter, he rendered me great assistance and I learned then to my surprise that he had made a deep study of classic English verse.

He raised a warning finger once when I happened to speak of the stock market. "Keep out of it," he said earnestly. "I've been on the Street since the Sixties and I'm one of the lucky ones simply because I've stuck to my legitimate business as a banker and broker. If I were to go on the market to-morrow as a trader with all those years of experience behind me I believe I'd go broke in a year."

Poor must have been nearly seventy years of age when

he uttered those words of caution, and yet, before another twelve months had passed, he had gone into speculation in stocks and had lost the bulk of his fortune. His library, said to be one of the best in the city, was sold, and his splendid house, built by Stanford White, was torn down and replaced by a tall apartment house.

It has been said that every man who has figured conspicuously on Broadway's green turf has passed to his ultimate reward leaving at least one aphorism behind him. A. M. Palmer said to me on the day preceding his fatal seizure: "Good God, Ford, isn't it enough if we managers give the public two hours and a half of entertainment without throwing in a college education to boot?" From the wise lips of Henry Guy Carleton fell this remark: "There are two metropolitan groups whom a dramatist may consider only at his peril when trying to please and interest the public—the critics and the Lambs' Club."

CHAPTER XVII

MY experience on the *Journal* during the early days of Mr. Hearst's ownership was one long to be remembered and of great interest and value. Hearst was the son of one of the early Nevada miners, distinguished for his "nose for ore," and of a lady of fine character and unmistakable breeding. Rusticated from Harvard because of a too vivid celebration of his father's election to the Senate, young Willie returned to California and was met by his parent with outstretched, welcoming hand. Offered a choice between a large ranch, a racing stable and a silver mine, he said he would prefer the *San Francisco Examiner,* which his father had bought to aid him in his election. Wisely enough, the son installed Samuel S. Chamberlain as his editor and it was not long before the property became a paying investment. The death of Senator Hearst left his widow with a huge fortune on her hands and it was a comparatively easy matter for her son to persuade her that newspaper property under his control was the best investment she could make. So with this huge capital behind him he acquired *The New York Journal* and came east with Chamberlain and some of the ablest members of the *Examiner's* staff.

In those days, before the advent of the prudent Carvalho, the *Journal* was conducted with a reckless indifference to expense that was thoroughly characteristic of its owner, who desired quick returns in circulation and

did not mind what they cost. This policy encouraged what are termed "freak assignments" which gratified my taste for the exploration of fresh urban trails. I discovered and gave fleeting renown to some little-known East Side concert halls; I went into the heart of Brooklyn to interview Laura Jean Libbey, and I took the Cherry Sisters around town and indicated to their wondering gaze the principal objects of interest that the city afforded.

Sadder duties fell to my lot when I was called upon to write obituaries of men whom I had known well, including Bill Nye, Eugene Field and Bunner. I think that the last bit of humor that came from Nye's pen occurred in a letter that he wrote to Sam Chamberlain concerning his unfortunate experience in Paterson.

"It's all a mistake about my being rotten-egged last week in the town of Spatterson. They were fresh, every one of them."

Sam Chamberlain was my immediate superior in the *Journal* office and in time became a valued friend. That he continued such to the day of his death while serving Hearst faithfully all that time, shows two of the many sides of his character. The son of Ivory Chamberlain, a well known newspaper man of his day, Sam had been bred to the craft and was, moreover, a man of fine literary taste and wide reading. In later life he lived in Chappaqua and there, after returning from his day's work in the *Journal* maelstrom, he would mount a telescope in front of his door and remain for hours studying the stars.

Chamberlain was gifted with a news instinct that told

him unerringly the relative importance of different pieces of news, which one should be "played up" on the front page and which should be relegated to a more obscure column. An instance of this that I recall may seem commonplace to experienced members of the profession but it impressed me strongly at the time.

Late one night, as I was seated with him in his private office, the city editor appeared in the doorway and said: "Mr. Chamberlain, that murder story is panning out pretty well and I thought you might like it on the front page. You remember it, don't you? That man who shot his sweetheart on a street-car?"

And then Chamberlain asked what seemed to me a perfectly irrelevant question, though it was one that instantly settled the proper disposition of the murder story. He did not, as I expected he would, enter into the romance of the tragedy or what is called in Park Row the "human interest" involved in it, but merely said: "What line was it on?" And on learning that it happened on a Bleecker Street car he said, "put it on an inside page."

"What are you laughing at?" he exclaimed, turning to me as the city editor departed. "Can't you see that what happens on a crosstown line attracts but little attention? If this had occurred on a Broadway car in front of the Hoffman House with William C. Whitney on the back platform and Marshall P. Wilder in front it would be worth a double column spread on the first page?"

As to Mr. Hearst I must speak of him as I knew him, and not as popular superstition represents him to be. He was a gentleman in manner, low voiced and more than courteous in his dealings with his employees. I do not

think I ever heard him use an expression unfit for a polite drawing-room and he said himself that he had paid for more liquor and drank less than any man on the Pacific Coast. He never seemed to consider money, and the advertising end of the business did not interest him. What he wanted was circulation which he believed could be best obtained by the constant printing of sensations. When peace brooded over the city and nobody was being robbed or murdered he would come down to the office with despondency written on his face and express the opinion that everything was going badly, but the tidings of some new crime or disaster would rouse him to instant action and I remember that on a certain development in the Guldensuppe murder case he jumped into a cab with one of his star men and went to the Turkish Bath where the victim had been employed.

But in those days I could not bring myself to take him seriously, for he reminded me of a kindly child, thoroughly undisciplined and possessed of a destructive tendency that might lead him to set fire to a house in order to see the engines play water on the flames, or, were Rome burning, to dance merrily to Nero's fiddling. The ideal Sunday supplement—the one best adapted to Sabbath reading—was, in his opinion, a combination of crime and underclothes. The passing years, however, have convinced me that at that time he was building better than I knew and that he had estimated the proportion of fools in the community with a perspicacity for which I failed to give him credit. In his calculations he had evidently been guided by Carlyle's studies of the population of Great Britain.

I think that it was in this office that the now famous "sob sister" made her first New York appearance and certainly this sorosis of tears was well represented there. Tidings of a colliery disaster would send one of them flying to the scene and straightway we would receive a despatch beginning about as follows: "I sobbed my way through the line, the stern-faced sentinels standing aside to let me pass with a muttered, 'the lady is from the *Journal;* let her by.' I was the first to reach the wounded and dying. 'God bless Mr. Hearst,' cried a little child as I stooped to lave her brow; and then she smiled and died. I spread one of our comic supplements over the pale, still face and went on to distribute Mr. Hearst's generous bounty."

I learned once from the lips of one of these "sob sisters" how she prepared an account of an errand of midsummer mercy among the children of the tenements. I give the recital in her own words:

"Of course the business office kicked at everything like expense, so the transportation and the grub were paid for in puffs and advertising. The ice-cream man agreed to furnish an unlimited supply in return for a picture of his daughter, then about to be married, and a puff of her high social station. But the cut went wrong in stereotyping and the girl came out looking like a chimpanzee, in consequence of which the old man gave us only a single can of ice-cream. It was with the greatest difficulty that I induced about twenty children to go down to Coney Island as Mr. Hearst's guests, for previous experiences had rendered them suspicious, but at last we started and all the way down I was trembling to think what would

happen when I dealt out that one miserable can of cream. When at last I placed a dab on each saucer, a little fellow in ragged knickerbockers got up and declared that the *Journal* was a fake and I thought there was going to be a riot."

"Good heavens!" I cried, "what on earth did you do?"

"I took away the ice-cream from a deaf and dumb kid who couldn't holler and gave it to the malcontent. Then I had to write my story beginning, 'Thousands of children, pale-faced but happy, danced merrily down Coney Island's beach yesterday and were soon sporting in the sun-lit waves shouting, "God bless Mr. Hearst!" ' "

The *Journal* under Hearst's early management, though by no means as radical as it became later, was a paper well calculated to attract attention and it was not long before cranks and others with all sorts of schemes in their heads began to storm its doors. Day after day a little group of these, each one of whom believed intensely in something, assembled in front of Mr. Hearst's private office in the hope of gaining an interview with him, who believed in nothing. Only an oak door and a determined office boy stood between him and the invading mob. They had waited so long and so patiently that they reminded me of the Millerites awaiting the coming of the Messiah and then one morning to their utter amazement the door was flung open and the great editor who was to redress so many wrongs if they could only get at him, stood among them. But before they could buttonhole him or even get out their petitions and documents, a sweet girl graduate of the chorus darted out, touched him lightly on the arm and with a merry cry,

"Tag Billy, you're it!" fled down the long corridor with Hearst in swift pursuit, to be seen no more forever by the waiting cranks.

Mention the name of Hearst in the hearing of the element known variously as Capital, Conservatism, and the Money Power and straightway there ensues a beating in the air with one impotent fist, a hammering on the table with the other, and a frenzied recital of what "ought to be done" to this dangerous man who is a menace to the public welfare. This element is usually lampooned as a giant with great hairy hands, whose chief occupation is oppressing the honest sons of toil. Why does not this giant take up arms against this menace to society instead of talking about him? A great many of us would be very glad to see Mr. Hearst put out of business and yet, despite the unlimited wealth and influence at its back, this giant does nothing. Millions for tribute, not one cent for defense, is his motto and he lives up to it.

The general belief is that Hearst is a menace because of his maniacal utterances, but the truth is that he owes his power to his sense of humor in its various phases and his knowledge of ridicule as a most effective weapon in a war on intelligence. He has always employed artists and writers of wit and has moreover encouraged them to do their best. Many of his cartoons have carried great weight and he was quick to recognise the value of the comic supplement as a circulation builder. His struggle with Mr. Pulitzer over the "Yellow Kid" series created the term "yellow journalism."

Were I a cartoonist I would depict "Capitalistic Greed," not as a giant, but as a jelly-fish, and Hearst as

a small boy frightening a lot of big lubber-lads with a false face and chasing them with a bladder tied to the end of a stick.

I persuaded Hearst to send me abroad on the novel plea that Europe seen through fresh eyes would mean entirely new impressions. Just before I started Rudyard Kipling said to me: "If you wish new impressions of London, keep off the beaten tracks. Take a room over a barber shop in the East End and study the habits of the humble folk about you. They have customs of their own—guinea pig exhibitions for example—that I have never seen described in print. However, you won't do it. You'll find yourself at the Empire Music Hall the night of your arrival and thence you will march on over paths made smooth by the feet of your countrymen."

Sure enough I found myself at the Empire Music Hall on the very night of my arrival in London and it was there that I tasted for the first time a "genuine American cocktail" flavored with raspberry vinegar.

I stayed long enough in England, most of the time in London, to gain some knowledge of English life and to make some valued friends but I did not gain any of the fresh impressions that I had hoped for. Were I able to punctuate the narrative of my stay with personal anecdotes of royalty and aristocracy my pages would gain enormously in interest, but all that I learned of those exalted circles was at second-hand and therefore not worth repeating. The best I can do is to describe a few of the high spots in my experience that remain vividly in my memory.

I worked as assistant to Julian Ralph, the cor-

respondent of the *New York Journal,* and it was not long before I began to suspect that there was something wrong in the methods employed by the average American correspondent, and by the time I left England, Ralph agreed with me. Ballard Smith, who represented the *World,* was always beating us in news stories, the fact being that he and his wife went much into society and thus learned what was happening in the great world of politics and diplomacy long before those events were chronicled in the British press. For London society differs from that of New York in that important news is first heard there, whereas that of our own metropolis is the last pocket into which it drops. It was a mere accident that first called my attention to these conditions. Ralph was indignant one morning because Smith had beaten him by cabling what seemed to me the unimportant fact that the Prince of Wales was going to visit Mr. Astor. "Good Heavens!" I exclaimed; "is that really news? Why, I heard that four days ago at a dinner-table and what's more I can tell you just what it's going to cost Astor in loans to the Prince. The company seemed to figure it out quite accurately and authoritatively."

My theory was confirmed later when I obtained a card for a musicale in a fashionable house and heard an official, dressed like a salmon trout, announcing in sonorous tones the names of the guests as they trooped past him on the staircase. Many of the names were of historic or current renown and I could not help feeling that it would be difficult for any New York hostess to assemble so many persons of influence and importance in

the serious affairs of the nation. Then my host explained to me that matters of state were intimately discussed by women as well as men at these gatherings.

At this time the Prince of Wales was the most discussed man in England and I heard much said both for and against him, for the element generally termed nonconformist disapproved of much that he did, but when I saw him win the Derby I gained an impression of his character that I have never shaken off.

As the race started the bookmakers and sportsmen among whom I stood in the enclosure took out their field-glasses and followed the horses as they swept around the course. They came down the stretch with the Prince's "Persimmon" and Rothschild's "St. Frusquin," in the lead and very soon a mighty shout, "St. Frusquin wins!" went up from a thousand throats and continued with increasing force until one man raised the strident cry, "The Prince wins!" This was taken up and spread through the enclosure and over the entire field. I could not hear anyone shout "Persimmon!" It was a tremendous roar of "The Prince! The Prince! The Prince!" that culminated in such a volume of sound as I have never heard from human lips before, and as the winner passed under the wire the air became darkened with hats. It was the multitude that threw up their hats, many of them ragged. Those in the Royal Enclosure removed theirs courteously but held them safe in their hands. Then I saw the heir to the throne of Great Britain lead his horse with the jockey still on his back, to the weighing stand.

I drove to the railway station seated beside the driver

who turned to me as we started saying: "I'm glad the Prince won, sir; we're all glad 'e won, for 'e's a rare good sort for a man the like o' me." And it seemed to me that it was a mighty thing for a prince so isolated to bridge the gulf between himself and "the likes o' " that cab-driver and make them all glad that he won the race.

One of the earliest of my English friends and one of the best as well was Phil May, the *Punch* artist whom I shall always hold in tender memory. There was an indescribable charm in Phil May and I find myself quite unable to convey an idea of his unique personality. Sweet-tempered, generous and friendly, he went about London viewing its people and especially the humbler ones, through kindly, humorous spectacles. Few men there were better known by sight and I have even heard street boys call him by name. Once, when I was rebuking him for his extravagance, we hailed a cab and immediately a swarm of urchins hurried forward to usher us in with cries of, " 'Ere y' are, sir!" closing in on us with officious pretence to aid us as we climbed in. In recognition of this perfectly useless service, May handed one of them a sixpence and in reply to my remonstrance said: "He was entitled to it. He contrived to get his hand on the wheel."

Another person whom I came to know very well and whose kindness I shall always recall with delight was Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison, the daughter of Charles Kingsley and known to the reading world as Lucas Malet. Wisely enough she had elected at the very beginning of her career to write under a *nom de plume,* so that her work might not be compared to its disad-

vantage with that of her distinguished father. There is no greater handicap to carry through life than the inheritance of a famous name. Mrs. Harrison's books are now much better known in this country than they were at that time, thanks largely to the impetus given by *Sir Richard Calmady*. But *The Wages of Sin* which I have always regarded as the best of her novels, is not as well known here as it should be. To read that and *Calmady* is to believe as I do, that Mrs. Harrison is the greatest writer of fiction of her sex in the English-speaking world, especially if judged at her high-water mark. She impressed me as combining in a wonderful way the poise of an Englishwoman of the highest class with the sparkle and quickness of perception for which the finest of my countrywomen are distinguished.

Mrs. Harrison took me to call on Miss Rhoda Broughton at the latter's home in Richmond and I found her exactly what I might have imagined her to be, a well-bred woman of incisive, rather cynical speech and keenly alive to the foibles and pretence of the world that she knew so well. I remember that on this occasion I mentioned one of America's most trusted delineators of aristocratic English life, Mrs. Hungerford, whose *nom de plume* was "The Duchess," and learned to my amazement that neither of the women I have named, nor Miss Rose Kingsley, who was also present, had ever heard of her.

Later in the summer I visited Clovelly on the Devonshire coast and through Mrs. Harrison came to know the Hamlyns, the owners of Clovelly Court, described by Lord Tennyson as the ideal English country home.

Here I soon found myself seated on a shady lawn, eating bread and butter and drinking tea, with the local curate hovering near, for all the world as if I were in the heart of an English novel.

I recall a little episode in Mrs. Harrison's drawing-room that furnished me with no little amusement. Before leaving America an Englishman of dubious standing with whom I had a slight acquaintance, pressed upon me a letter of introduction to his cousin, a rather distinguished baronet. This epistle opened in a strain of jovial familiarity—"Dear George: You ought to know Jim Ford"—and I determined at once that under no circumstances would I present it. Indeed I had forgotten about it until I chanced to meet the wife of this baronet at Mrs. Harrison's one afternoon.

"So you are from America, Mr. Ford? My husband has a rascally cousin who lives over there and every once in a while some awful bounder comes to our house with a letter of introduction from him. Of course we never let the fellow in but I have often wondered if it was the custom in America to give letters of introduction so freely."

I condoled with her sympathetically and I am sure that she has never learned that only my circumspection saved her husband from the visit of another of those "awful bounders."

Thanks to family connections I was invited to spend a few days with Sir Seymour and Lady Haden at Woodcote, their country home in Hampshire and a very delightful and interesting visit it proved. Woodcote is an Elizabethan house with tapestries three

centuries old on the walls and a priest's room, in which I slept, on the upper floor, still guarded by oaken bars and with a tunnel leading thence to the Roman Catholic chapel, a quarter of a mile distant. Lady Haden, a sister of Whistler, was totally blind at this time but despite this affliction a cheerful and altogether delightful companion. Sir Seymour had been a physician in London for many years before he gave up his practice to devote himself to etching, and he had known many of the most distinguished men of his day, numbering both Thackeray and Dickens among his patients. The former's death, he said, was due to his habit of drinking claret to excess, and after every one of the periodicals his doctor would be called in to restore him to his normal condition. On the eve of Christmas Day, 1863, Sir Seymour was summoned to aid him in his recovery from such an attack and that night he left him "feeling pretty comfortable" as he said to me, adding: "The next morning his valet found him dead. I was the last man to see him alive."

Woodcote was owned, I believe, by the Tichborne family of litigious fame, whose country seat was in the neighborhood. According to ancient tradition the owner of Woodcote who tried to live within its walls invariably died within the first year of his residence and it was this legend that prevented Sir Seymour from acquiring the property by purchase; but he leased it for the term of his natural life and there he dwelt peacefully until his death in his ninety-third year. Edwin A. Abbey, who visited him from time to time, conceived a strong liking for this lovely old house in its well-

wooded, pastoral setting and on the death of his friend proceeded to defy superstition and make it his home. He died before he had owned it a year.

There was pointed out to me in the neighborhood one of the few survivals of a very ancient British law, a house that was held on key-hold. That is to say, the possession of the door-key meant ownership of the house and on the death of the owner the house went to whomever could get hold of the key. It seems to me an admirable law and one destined to save the money so often uselessly spent in litigation between heirs.

A gentleman whom I came to know quite well and whose talk of by-gone days afforded me much delight was John Hollingshead, who had been closely associated with Dickens in early manhood and in later years became well known to London's play-going public as the manager of the Gaiety Theatre. I knew him as an old man in much reduced circumstances but possessed of unfailing cheerfulness. He had had his ups and downs and I never heard him utter a word of complaint. He had actually known Charles Lamb when he was a small boy—he was but seven when the great essayist died—and he told me that he remembered him distinctly, looking exactly as he did in all accepted portraits. As a youth Mr. Hollingshead lived with an aunt to whose care patients from a near-by insane asylum were frequently entrusted, and here he was in the habit of playing cards with Mary Lamb, also an inmate of the house, until his twentieth year. He told me something about the killing of Mrs. Lamb by her daughter that will, I think, soften the hearts of American housekeepers toward the

demented murderess. It seems that Mary seized an axe and started to kill the cook and it was while trying to defend the domestic that the mother received her deathblow.

A visit paid to Cambridge remains one of the most agreeable memories of my stay in England. I went there in vacation time in company with a friend who, as a graduate of the University, had the privilege of using certain unoccupied rooms in one of the Colleges. We dined every night with the Fellows in their beautiful hall and spent the evenings in the rooms of our various entertainers. It was strictly scholastic society in which I found myself but totally different from that of any academicians I have known in this country. Those who composed it impressed me not only as scholars in the real sense of the word but as men of the world also, for their education had not ceased with the last pages of the books they had read but had been employed, together with travel and social intercourse, in the study of that which Pope has declared to be the proper study of mankind. When I was at boarding-school, preparing for the college course which I never had, I actually thought that when I mastered certain of the Latin and Greek classics and higher mathematics there would be nothing else for me to learn. It has since seemed to me that many of our own academicians show by their public utterances that they have not yet advanced beyond this primitive form of belief.

A visit of a totally different kind but of equal pleasure and interest was that which I paid to the County of Donegal in Ireland. And I have wondered ever since

John Hollingshead, a Well-known London Manager. In His Boyhood He Knew Charles and Mary Lamb

why the professional Irish of America do not spend more time in the land whose wrongs they seek to redress and less in London when they go abroad. They have only to converse with the peasantry to realize that the gift of eloquence is not the exclusive property of the educated. Frequently I was surprised at the expressions that fell from the lips of the untaught representatives of their race and learned that they were the direct inheritance from forebears who had learned their lessons in hedge schools under the tuition of really learned and cultivated priests. Recorder Goff, I am told, is the last representative of this educational system still alive in New York.

So many stories have been told of Irish sayings that it seems almost superfluous to add the following, one of which was told me by a well known priest of that race who was driving through a county new to him under the tutelage of a typical jarvey.

"A very bad man lived there," said the latter pointing to a fine house that stood directly in front of a lake. "He used to drive his wife out into the water beyant so she'd be afeared to come home," and forthwith he narrated other appalling evil-doings.

"And where is he now?" inquired the priest.

"That's for your reverence to say," replied the driver, deferring courteously to the superior theological knowledge of his fare.

The murder of Lord Leitrim had occurred in the neighborhood that I visited and I heard many discussions of the event without being able to form any accurate opinion of the rights and wrongs of the quarrel

between that nobleman and his tenants, until a peasant who had listened quietly to our talk had his own say in the following words:

"I mind hearin' tell of an ould tinant of Lord Leitrim's who set up a public house in America in a place they call Philadelphia. Maybe his honor here knows where that is." As he had indicated me with a wave of his pipe I acknowledged that I did and the speaker continued:

"When he heard the news of the ould Lord's death, he broached a cask of liquor and set it out on the sidewalk before his door wit' a tin cup alongside and bade every man that passed stop an' take a drink because Lord Leitrim was dead."

Twice I have visited the continent of Europe in the hope of recording some profound observations on the peoples of the various countries and their customs, but I was seldom able to observe anything that had not been observed by many previous travelers. The only thoughts that arose in my breast when I stood before the tomb of Napoleon under the dome of the *Invalides* or when I saw the field of waving grain at Waterloo I now realize were too commonplace to bear recital. I took the usual trip down the Rhine and was impressed by the complete absence of anything like pleasure travel and also by the theatrical appearance of the shores with their woods and vineyards. The castles seemed to be placed exactly where they were needed to be most effective and the entire river might have been set by Belasco. The vineyards were by no means the scenes of joyous merriment that comic opera has shown them to be. I saw no short-

skirted maidens dancing among them, no inn-keeper serving flagons of phantom beverage to his noble guests; nor could I hear the voice of Ed Rice crying: "Now then, ladies, get a move on you! People don't pay a dollar and a half to see you fall asleep!" During the entire trip I was accompanied by a swarm of flies, attracted by the honey acquired at breakfast in Mainz. They remained, feasting on that delicacy, which I found it impossible to comb out of my hair and beard, until we reached the mouth of the river.

Many of the well-meaning friends who have urged me to set down these memoirs have said from time to time, "I hope you are making notes for your future book." In fact I made several notes long before I decided to enter upon the work only to find that nearly all of them were worthless. It is impossible to tell at the moment which one of our acquaintances is destined to become famous or which apparently insignificant episode will live in history. In other words, my foresight, like that of many others, has always been inferior to my hindsight.

There was at one time on West Forty-second Street, opposite the Park, a hotel called the Campbell House, kept by a brother of May Irwin and sheltering many members of the dramatic profession, among whom I recall beside Miss Irwin, Mrs. McKee Rankin and her daughter Phyllis, Hattie Williams, Ada Lewis, Ben Teal and his wife, professionally known as Florence Thornton, and now the widow of William Harris, the theatrical manager. I was a frequenter of the Campbell and greatly enjoyed the social advantages that it offered,

among which was my acquaintance with Charles E. Trevathan and his colored boy, Cooley. With the characteristic lack of foresight I made no note of this circumstance, little dreaming that I was then actually present at the birth of a school of music that has since gone all over the world.

Trevathan was an easy going Southerner employed on the *Journal* and sometimes in the capacity of judge at western race tracks. He was the best writer on matters connected with the turf that I have ever known and could make the life of a famous racer as interesting as that of a human being. Later in life he was employed by William C. Whitney to prepare the chronicles of the American trotting horse.

It was related of him that once, while living in San Francisco, his habitual distaste for work led him to embark on a sailing vessel for the more congenial climate of the Pacific Isles. Landing at Samoa he sought out an old friend named Dunning, the local representative of the Associated Press. The two sat down for friendly intercourse with several bottles before them and were thus engaged when the now historic hurricane burst upon the island. By this time Dunning was *hors de combat* and Charlie, moved by a kindly wish to save his friend's job for him, wrote and forwarded a description of the catastrophe that went all over the country and inspired more than one poem. The receipt of this descriptive article with Dunning's name attached, amazed the Associated Press officials who had never believed their correspondent capable of writing anything equal to it.

Not until Charlie's return to San Francisco was the authorship made known.

While living at the Campbell, Trevathan devoted much of his time to re-making the words and music of the songs that Cooley picked up in the more disreputable resorts of his race. Master and man worked well together and many a time I have heard the former say: "Ah feel awful cur'is this mawnin'; Ah feel so cur'is that Ah don't want to go to work. Cooley, go get the banjos an' we'll rag over a coupla songs."

The two would play together and the colored boy would often fall asleep and continue to play until Charlie stopped, when he would instantly awake, rub his eyes and look around as if to make sure of his whereabouts. I often listened to them without suspecting that rag-time was being created by their nimble fingers. It was thus that I heard the "Frog Song," the "New Bully" and "Crappy Dan," long before Miss Irwin gave them their great vogue.

Through association in playwriting with Lorimer Stoddard, I became a frequent visitor at his home in East Fifteenth Street and thus knew his father, Richard Henry Stoddard, very well. The upper floor of the house was filled with books, accumulated by the poet during many years of writing and reviewing, and I always wondered what treasures in the way of autographed first editions might be hidden among them. I knew the family also in Sag Harbor and desire to put on record something that happened there that gave me an undying regard for the elder Stoddard's integrity.

At that time the proprietor of one of the daily papers

had secured as a leading contributor a new western poet and was doing his best to boom him into undeserved popularity. Mr. Stoddard had been frequently importuned to print in the literary column he was then conducting in an evening journal an "appreciation" of this bard and had persistently ignored these requests, although the handsome cheque offered him would have been more than welcome just then.

"I'm too old to make any new enemies," said the old gentleman to me one day, "but I really had to write something about that fellow just to keep those people from bothering me," and what he did write and print was that the product of the western poet's pen was "cheap chin music." After that I never saw that gray head bent over its nightly task in the hot glare of the evening lamp without perceiving around it a distinct halo. Nor did my respect for him lessen when he returned to the stifling city earlier than was his wont because he could not afford to prolong his stay in the cooler Long Island village.

It was on the night of January 9, in the last year of this decade that David Belasco, who had done excellent work at the Madison Square Theatre and later at the Lyceum—it was at the last-named that he formed the association with Benjamin F. Roeder that has continued to the present day—suddenly came into his own through the sensational success of his pupil, Mrs. Leslie Carter in *Zaza*. I regard Mrs. Carter's success on the stage as an example, as yet unsurpassed, of what can be accomplished by the skilful development of what seemed to

other experts very ordinary talent. When she induced Belasco to undertake her professional education and management, Mrs. Carter had few of those gifts of beauty and elocution on which managers are wont to rely. But she had temperament and industry to a degree that inspired her teacher with supreme confidence in her ultimate success. She had also a voice of great natural mobility and in time she became a complete mistress of it so that she could run the whole gamut of human emotions with a touch as sure as that of a Joseffy on the keys of the piano. She had already appeared in *The Ugly Duckling, Miss Helyet* and *The Heart of Maryland,* when Belasco visited Paris and saw Rejane in a play that several American stars and managers had refused on the ground that it was impossible for this country.

But Belasco, as usual wiser than his contemporaries, saw that *Zaza* could be adapted into a possibility and proceeded to acquire the American rights and to set about the work of adjusting it to the talents of his star. He changed the final scene in such a way as to suggest the reform and penitence so dear to American audiences, and remade the stellar part to display everything Mrs. Carter could do in the way of emotional acting. As played by her it was one of the longest parts ever entrusted to the mercies of an actress. The whole play contained about thirty-three thousand words and of these Mrs. Carter read nearly twenty-seven thousand.

Never in all the history of the English-speaking stage has the true player spirit found finer expression than

when Edward Kean, in response to his wife's eager, "What did Lord Essex say?" made answer: "Damn Lord Essex! The pit rose at me!"

No novel of stage life that I have ever read describes the début of an actress that even remotely suggests the dramatic interest of the moment in which Mrs. Carter reached the climax of this drama and of her career. It would be interesting to know what doubts, hopes and fears filled her mind that night as she stood in the wings of the Garrick Theatre awaiting her cue, conscious that everything that wise heads could devise had been done for her and that on her shoulders now rested the sole responsibility for success or failure. Carefully guarding her interests in the box-office was Charles Frohman, most astute of managers; beside her, with words of encouragement on his lips, her teacher, unequalled in stage cunning; behind her, nearly a decade of incessant work and study; before her such an audience as New York assembles only when the occasion promises to become historic—an audience that she must now conquer.

Few laymen, even those who are themselves habitual first-nighters, ever consider the various elements, for the most part hostile or indifferent, that make up such a gathering as this. Trained critics, their taste vitiated and their enthusiasm dulled by years of playgoing; bejewelled and over-dressed women with husbands or lovers; men of affairs and of the learned professions seeking respite from toil and anxiety—these, with a generous sprinkling of the residuum found at the bottom of the retort after the final analysis of humanity and called "men about town," composed the audience with

Mrs. Leslie Carter, Famous as *Zaza*

which the actress found herself face to face when, responding to her cue, she stepped out on the stage.

Not even the most deeply interested of her auditors knew how difficult was the task that lay before her or appreciated the skill with which the combined work of dramatist, adapter and producer led them along to the engrossing scene at the close of the fourth act. The character that Mrs. Carter portrayed, a French music-hall singer of obviously loose morals, was one repugnant to any American audience, especially to a sophisticated one which had no romantic illusions regarding a woman of that class. It was necessary, therefore, to change that repugnance into sympathy, as it had been the task of the playwright and producer to create and maintain a growing interest in the drama.

The first act, with its revelations of stage artifice, pleased and interested; sympathy, aroused in the second when Zaza learned that her lover was a married man, secured a tighter grip in the third when she visited his wife and child in Paris and withdrew without hostile demonstration; and by the close of the fourth had gained such a secure hold that Mrs. Carter's unexpected *tour de force* aroused a demonstration such as is seldom seen save in a Latin nation. In that outburst of long-restrained feeling every one of the varied elements composing that gathering joined in perfect accord. For the actress it was a moment of triumph in which she might well have damned the entire peerage. The house had at last risen at her.

I have not written this to prove Mrs. Carter a great actress or *Zaza* a great play but rather to describe what

happened that night and to express the hope that the lesson that it conveys will not be entirely lost on the new generation of players.

I have devoted space to this recital of an occasion that marked the high-water mark in a once popular player's career, because I wish to convey an idea of that little-understood branch of theatric art called "preparation."

Few persons who are moved to laughter or tears by an amusing or serious episode or situation, have any conception of the skill with which the dramatist has already prepared them for the resultant moment. Once I complimented Joe Weber on the manner in which he had awakened uproarious laughter by his artless reading of a humorous line which, in my innocence, I had supposed was an accidental interpolation, conceived perhaps by himself. To this he made answer, "You've no idea how long it took us to get that line in. There was several minutes of preparation before it." Not until I had seen the piece again was I able to trace this long process of preparation. In the case of Mrs. Carter the period of preparation lasted nearly ten years instead of as many minutes, but it all led up to the moment in which she enjoyed the supreme triumph that so seldom comes to even the most distinguished actor.

"What has become of Mrs. Carter?" is a question that has often been put to me with ever lessening frequency during the past few years. And it sometimes leads me to ask: "What becomes of any actress, Bernhardt alone excepted, when she parts from her manager?" The career of Ada Rehan after the death of Augustin Daly,

of Ellen Terry after she left Irving, and of Duse after she left the direction of her wise parents to serve under a poet, are all cases in point. To think of all these women is to understand that Du Maurier knew what he was about when he drew the character of Svengali.

Mrs. Carter's triumph was also Belasco's, and in a much greater degree, for it had revealed him in the double capacity of manager and instructor and there are always thousands of young women in search of both. He proceeded to extend his activities in both fields by purchasing Hammerstein's Theatre and rebuilding it and by undertaking the management of Blanche Bates and other stars. His success in developing talent created a furor in the ranks of the profession and, as my own friendly relations became known, my mail was flooded with requests to be "put next him." Once, while waiting in the lower hall of a theatrical boarding-house I heard a bath-robed actress on the upper landing say in the voice of illiteracy: "Look what he done for Carter! Look what he done for Bates! If he done it for them he can do it for me and I've got a friend that says he must."

About this time the disastrous influence of the great Duse on our own players was noted with regret by certain keen observers of the nation's advancement in the arts. The critics had written that she was "natural," a peculiarity to which many actresses had not been blind. Now Duse was natural in the true sense of the word, but artificial naturalism is often a cloak to conceal greater

sins against art, and one that even actors of the first rank have been tempted to assume. Edwin Booth's wife warned her husband against this fault in a letter in which she instanced Matilda Heron as one guilty of it. But no sooner was the Italian player's genius recognized than the word went forth that naturalism was the high road to such fame as hers, and straightway scores of immature actresses, quick to imitate whatever they thought was novelty, became natural in such an unnatural degree that it was hard to guess what they were driving at. Nor, so far as I can remember, did one of them reveal in her efforts the smallest understanding of the great Italian's superbly simple method by which, although speaking in an alien tongue, she held her audience in the very hollow of her hand.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN the annals of the first decade of the new century the march of literature and the drama is punctuated by certain indelible marks, written in the red ink with which episodes of historic significance are usually inscribed. Chief among these episodes were the beginnings of muck-raking and best-sellers and the increased attention paid to dramas of the Ibsen school, first seen here in the previous decade.

It was mere chance that gave muck-raking its opportunity to swell magazine circulation. One evening at a party given by Mr. John A. Thayer, one of the owners of *Everybody's Magazine*, the conversation turned on an interview with Mr. Thomas Lawson, printed in the *New York World*, and two days later, Thayer and his editor, John O'Hara Cosgrave, went to Boston to see Lawson; but it was not until much later that the spectacular financier was induced to talk. The first of the series appeared in July, 1904, at which time the magazine had a circulation of 300,000, to which 150,000 were added in order to supply the demands for the first Lawson installment. By September the circulation had reached nearly the million point and during the two years in which the series ran the average was 750,000. During this time Mr. Cosgrave was obliged to live in Boston and literally drag the copy out of the author, month after month.

Like many another man who writes slowly and with

difficulty, Lawson was entertaining when he did write, and the success of his articles was largely due to their amusing quality. Other magazines were quick to take up muck-raking as a circulation builder; McClure muck-raked the Standard Oil Company and Christian Science, and before long, nearly every great industry in the country was being ripped asunder and its entrails exposed to the public gaze. Eventually McClure realized that the boom was over and refused "The Horrors of the Tooth-Pick Trust," saying: "We're going to have a year of sunshine now."

I always regarded Mr. Hearst as the real creator of the best-seller, for his papers, with their frenzied editorials and picturesque Sunday supplements, developed a demand for that which was frankly fiction in the minds of a vast number of people to whom the reading habit had been previously unknown. *David Harum,* the first of the best-sellers, appeared in 1898, and was a story that even the least enlightened person could understand. It was the work of an amateur named Westcott who, sad to relate, did not live to see what his hand had wrought. It was a simple, old-fashioned tale of bucolic life which owed a great deal of its popularity to the chapter describing a transaction in horse flesh in which its hero got the best of a country deacon. At the advice of the late Ripley Hitchcock, who accepted the story for the Appletons, this chapter was transferred to the earlier pages of the novel where it was more likely to enchain the fancy of the careless reader. The book reached a sale of innumerable copies and was followed by *Janice Meredith, The Honorable Peter Sterling* and others of its kind.

Sterling was read with serious interest by a great many apparently sophisticated persons, but to those familiar with urban life its pictures of downtown politics and of the East Side saloon-keeper who did not wish his patrons to drink too much were absurd.

Ibsen had already been revealed to the town in a previous decade but it was not until the new century that his plays began to acquire their vogue among the large owlish class who were utterly unable to understand them. I witnessed one or two of them in that cavern under the Carnegie building where so many foul crimes against dramatic art have been committed, and noted with dismay the open-eyed wonder and respect with which bad acting was regarded. It was not long before Ibsen matinées became extremely popular with the element that constantly clamours for the "higher intellectual drama" and will not pay to see it. I have never yet met a professional "Ibsenite" who understood the plays he pretended to admire or realized that those actors who sedulously built up the chief rôles by the tricks and devices that have made the star system what it is, were violating every rule laid down by the great dramatist. I have always believed that the Ibsen drama, now regarded as a sort of house of refuge for bad actors, could be presented profitably in cheap theatres where it would be better understood.

In the summer of 1906 I occupied an apartment in the Bella, directly opposite Madison Square Garden, and one night the sound of a pistol fired in the roof garden which surrounded that place of amusement was distinctly heard by those dwelling across the way. Scant atten-

tion was paid to it and it was not until the next morning that we learned that a single bullet, fired by a degenerate young man, had robbed New York of a citizen to whom the town owed a debt of gratitude for his beautifying handiwork and had at the same time started a young woman on her way to the Mecca of her kind, the top line on vaudeville programmes.

Never have I known such wholesale injustice as the murder of Stanford White, the escape of the assassin from the full penalty of his act, the slight left upon the victim's reputation, and the later prosperity of the young woman who was the cause of it all.

In considering Stanford White we should take into account the fact that he labored under the burden of inherited sensuality. That he was a man of loose life was so insistently dwelt upon by the lawyers who defended the murderer as well as by the corps of "sob sisters" who nursed the young woman's budding vaudeville ambitions, that the public was firmly convinced that the distinguished architect "got all that was coming to him." Of the many admirable qualities known only to his wide circle of friends, very little was made public. Yet no man ever displayed a more generous solicitude for the struggling members of his craft than did Stanford White. He would note among the names of those posted for delinquency in the Players' Club, that of an artist whom he knew to be embarrassed by illness, family responsibilities or temporary hard luck, and would pay the artist's dues from his own pocket, procure work for him in the decoration of one of his buildings and bid him, to quote his words oft repeated in such

cases, "get into the game again." Early in the evening on which he was murdered he attended a Directors' meeting at one of his clubs at which the question of dropping a delinquent member came up for discussion.

"He's had hard luck of late," said White, "now he's getting on his feet and I happen to know that it's a great advantage to him to belong to this club. Better let the matter rest till our next meeting."

"But," rejoined another, "we've no choice in the matter; we've got to follow the rules."

"Very well, then, I'll settle for him myself." The amount was a little over a hundred dollars and although the delinquent was not one of White's intimate friends, little more than an acquaintance, in fact, the architect paid his dues from his own pocket. It was his last act of generosity. An hour later a shot fired at him from behind stretched him on the floor of the roof-garden where he lay motionless in the midst of the startled crowd until a compassionate waiter threw a table-cloth over him.

Consistent with his kindness to his friends was White's treatment of the girl Evelyn. It was brought out at the trial that on festive occasions he limited her to a single glass of wine and that he paid for her education at Mrs. De Mille's boarding-school. He was also paying for her brother's living at the moment of his own death.

Thaw was a Pittsburgh product, the son of a hard-headed Scotchman, who had amassed a great fortune and, fully realizing the boy's weakness of character, limited his allowance by will to fifty dollars a week.

This his widow injudiciously increased to an almost unlimited degree, for Harry found it easy to persuade her that such articles of necessity as feminine companionship, plush-furnished New York flats, champagne and hypodermic syringes and drugs could not be enjoyed on the income assigned him by his father. So well did he make use of his new opportunities that it was not long before he had been put out of at least three hotels.

Evelyn Nesbitt was another Pittsburgh product, but of a class different from Thaw. She first came into public view on the stage of Mrs. Osborne's Playhouse, where her good looks attracted the attention of many young men of fashion, and it was here, I believe, that the rivalry between White and Thaw began. With a skill that seems native to girls of her tendencies, Evelyn nursed Thaw's resultant jealousy by telling him of what White was doing for her and promising to do in the way of money. With his evil passions thus aroused Thaw hired private detectives to spy on his rival and for many months they kept on his trail.

A few days before his death White called at the rooms of an intimate friend of mine and asked permission to sleep for a while on his sofa, adding, "I'm all worn out with this business and don't really know how it will end. Sometimes I feel like going to Europe for a while just to get away from it. Look out of the window and you'll see what I mean."

My friend looked out and saw two men seated on the steps of the opposite house, and when, an hour later, his guest departed, he saw those men pick up the trail and follow him up the street.

I knew White, not intimately, for nearly twenty years and I have seldom received a greater shock than I did when I first heard of his death. Richard Harding Davis printed in *Collier's Weekly* a fine and convincing vindication of his character, but otherwise he was unjustly maligned, especially by persons and newspapers out of town. Great stress was laid on the studio in West Twenty-fourth Street in which it was claimed that drugs were administered to his victims. I have been in that studio many a time and can cheerfully testify that I never met a lady there who needed any drugs.

Crime as well as politics makes strange bed-fellows. The first hand extended in greeting to Thaw as he entered Matteawan was that of Quimbo Appo, said to be the first Chinese of the lower caste ever brought to this country, and the father of George Appo, in whom are united the occult craft of the East and the various qualities that compose an evil-doer of western upbringing. It was the younger Appo who, in the course of his testimony before the Lexow committee, enriched our language with "come-on," "come-back" and "he trun a scare into him." That Thaw, whose only friends had been those attracted by his reckless money-spending, should have rejected the only hand ever extended to him in unselfish spirit seems amazing.

About this time the word "psychology" and its little brood of derivatives were observed roaming through the upper reaches of the dramatic profession, unable to make themselves understood or to speak the language of Broad-

way. It was not long, however, before their worth was recognized and won for them a cordial welcome to the vulgate. Players who had previously been content with melodramatic rôles of stirring interest began to talk about the "psychology of the audience" and to clamour for "psychological," once called "thinking" parts. Coincident with the invasion of these terms reporters of mid-western nativity and not yet acclimatized to urban ways began to write and talk about "little old New York." I have noted these incidents to show the constant advance of art and letters.

In the construction of the New Theatre, one may see an example of commercial or box-office management run wild. The chief good that it accomplished lay in the instruction that it imparted by its failure to men of wealth and to the theatrical profession.

It is not fair to attribute unworthy motives to the founders of this monstrous folly. Their object was not, as so many would have us believe, a sordid desire to make money. They wished to give New York a theatre in which plays of the highest merit should be produced, not by stars but by a company of great and even merit. The mistake that they made was in believing that money was as powerful in art as in Wall Street, a delusion that will never be completely knocked out of the heads of those persons whose confidence in the enterprise was expressed in the terse phrase: "They're sure to succeed! Look at all the money they've got!" Which was precisely what they would have said had Messrs. Morgan and Rocke-

feller collaborated in the painting of a picture or the writing of a drama.

The founders were undoubtedly influenced by the belief then current that the Syndicate, then largely in control of the theatre, was not living up to its policy of "giving the public what it wanted" and was simply devoting its energies to the making of money. Not even the fact that large box-office receipts were, to a certain extent, evidence that the public was getting what it wanted, could prevent the spread of this notion. So far as I know managers have always been the subject of general opprobrium. I myself have heard abuse heaped upon the heads of Wallack, Palmer and Augustin Daly, each one of whom rendered material aid in the development of our national drama. That the founders of the New Theatre earnestly desired to give theatre-goers something better than that which was vouchsafed to them by other managers is indisputable, but they went about their work in the wrong way and in a spirit of condescension that was the seed of their failure.

For it is essential that dramatic art should look up to its audience and not down. The hero or heroine of a play becomes so only by virtue of misfortune, just as the blind girl in *The Two Orphans* became automatically the heroine of that play and its star part. All the traditions of the English stage point to this fact and have long since found expression in the term, "the public's most humble and grateful servant," employed by great players like Garrick and Siddons. And no actor of experience will deny that the greatest respect must be accorded, not to those who loll in the boxes and stalls,

but to those in the cheaper seats, for it is they who have made the greater sacrifice to secure entrance. "Consider that awful thing you have before you, that collection of human hearts, and respect it," said Bronson Howard, addressing his fellow-dramatists.

Yet despite these worthy traditions, the founders entered upon their venture in disregard of these humbler folk, for they chose a site more conveniently reached by automobile than by the ordinary democratic means of transit, a lonely spot, opposite Central Park, where the silence was broken only by the infrequent passing of the Eighth Avenue car or the shrill note of the bittern calling to its mate. The venture was launched with appropriate ceremonies at the laying of the cornerstone and later at the dedicatory exercises, and both occasions attracted a group of millionaires calculated to make the anarchistic mouth water. Speeches were made and passages from Shakespeare recited but no one thought of uttering the phrase best suited to the occasion, "In the name of the prophet, figs!"

The scheme, in the vision of all true believers in the miraculous powers of gold, certainly promised well at the start and its promises, so far as the beauty, capacity, and stage accoutrements of the building went were well kept. The seats were wide and soft and there were elevators ready to convey to the upper gallery persons who seldom went there. I remember that when Dr. Cook disappeared from view on the heels of his exposure, and reporters were hunting for him everywhere, Charlie Dillingham said: "I know where he is; he's hiding in the gallery of the New Theatre." But when, at the

dress rehearsal of *Antony and Cleopatra,* the opening piece, "a bit of flapping painted canvas was seen to represent Cleopatra's barge," and when even then the non-stellar policy was set at naught by the engagement of that very well known star, Mr. Sothern, faith in the promises began to wane. The acoustics were found to be faulty, which may be accounted for by the fact that Conried, who was the first to get his finger into the managerial pie, had secret designs on the building as the future home for grand opera.

In Mr. Galsworthy's *Strife,* the management presented a play of really great merit and one that might have enjoyed widespread popularity had it not been for the attitude of condescension, which under-rated the intelligence of the public. In order to meet this general ignorance of the American people as to English customs, the play was localized and the scene changed from a British manufacturing city to the neighborhood of Pittsburgh, with the result that toil-stained workingmen took afternoon tea. Nevertheless, the production gave opportunities to two splendid actors, both of whom gave noteworthy performances. One of these was Albert Bruning, a graduate of the German stage and long established here in popular esteem; the other, the English actor, Mr. Calvert, and the drama was based on the conflict between labor and capital. As a working man of more than ordinary intelligence, Mr. Bruning was arrayed against the other player, the manager of a great factory, and the conflict played by two such artists was one of vital interest. Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk gave a fine portrayal of a wealthy shareholder in the factory,

but as it was a distinctively English shareholder and not the sort of man who puts his money into a Pittsburgh enterprise, it is safe to assume that he learned his part before the piece was altered.

The New Theatre lasted four years and at the end of that time its founders realized that they had spent about four millions of dollars and had nothing to show for their money except a theatre that it was almost impossible to lease. It did not develop a single actor or dramatist, so far as my memory serves, and its productions that were afterward seen in other theatres were *The Blue Bird* and Edward Sheldon's *The Nigger.* It did, however, succeed in fastening the opprobrious term of "commercial" on all the other theatres, owing to the fact that it was itself founded on money, carried along on money and abandoned because it lost money. All of which drew from the lips of that profound logician, Professor William L. Phelps, a Yalean utterance that should go down through the ages as an expression of the academic school of thought: "The most important event in the history of the American drama was the laying of the cornerstone of the New Theatre."

About this time the term "Greek note" entered into competition with "psychology" and its derivatives in the lexicon of the theatrical profession, and was seized upon with avidity by stars and producers as a means of stimulating activity at rehearsals. The term is believed to have had its origin in one of the upper strata of what we used to call, "chromo-literary society," for it was first

introduced behind the foot-lights by a player who had been able to exhibit himself in one of the salons of the period. "You want to sound the Greek note in that scene!" was the phrase with which he stunned the company one morning. "What is the Greek note?" inquired the ingénue with equally stunning effect. "Well," he replied after a moment's thought, "if you don't understand the English language of course I can't explain it to you. Go on with the lines and we'll do the best we can."

CHAPTER XIX

THE New Theatre proved of benefit to me in an entirely unexpected way. I had ridiculed it from the very start and had predicted its failure in a printed article that I set about writing on the very day that Professor Phelps regards as one of epoch-making importance. I had also laughed at an intimate friend of mine, Mr. Robert B. Van Cortlandt, who was one of its founders, and I remember that on one occasion we almost came to blows about it while lunching at the Café Martin. I remember also that after the scheme had collapsed he showed me the season ticket to the building that represented his total investment and told me sadly how much it had cost him. But the fulfilment of my prophecy gave him faith in my ability and it was he who backed my subsequent venture, *The Porcupine.*

From the time when I began to contribute to *Puck* I have always had a keen interest in satirical journalism and have made more than one attempt to possess an interest in such a paper myself. *Puck,* in the days of its greatness, was a power in the land such as does not exist to-day, although the nation stands sadly in need of one. It shot folly as it flew, punctured shams, and dealt with politics and other matters of serious import fearlessly, sincerely, and, on the whole, truthfully. Keppler took the place previously filled by Thomas Nast as the lead-

ing American cartoonist and to his cartoons the members of the staff gave freely of their brains. One of the most famous cartoons ever printed in *Puck* bore the name of Bernard Gillam, then a member of the staff, and was called "The Tattooed Man." So effective was it that the National Democratic Committee ordered many thousand copies of the paper for distribution as it appeared on the eve of the Presidential contest between Grover Cleveland and James G. Blaine.

The picture, which was suggested by Carl Hauser, represented various statesmen of the moment as freaks in a dime museum, and when the rough sketch was submitted to the council that assembled weekly to criticize and discuss the cartoons, the tattooed man was the figure of David Davis, set far into the background. Schwartzmann, one of the proprietors of *Puck*, objected to the use of Davis because of his clean record and then some one suggested Blaine and some one else remarked that he should be tattooed with the lines "Little Rock" and "Mulligan Letters," two political war-cries then in vogue. In order to show this lettering the figure of the tattooed man was brought down to the front of the picture and thus became the most striking feature of the cartoon. The proprietors of *Judge* straightway engaged Gillam as their chief cartoonist but neglected to employ the members of the staff who had furnished the idea and suggestions.

In later years, Cleveland stated quite frankly that this cartoon and the *Puck* editorials had done more to elect him than any other influence employed in the campaign.

My next experience in satirical journalism was on

Truth, then controlled by Blakely Hall, a brilliant newspaper man who was also a good promoter. I was the managing editor, and our staff included George B. Luks, then a comic artist of great skill and even greater promise; Granville Smith, Archie Gunn, Roy McArdell, a genuine humorist of the sort that makes you laugh, and Robert W. Chambers, whom we employed as an illustrator. Our color printing was done by the American Lithograph Company and I am proud to say that our circulation soon reached that of *Puck,* but the success of *Truth* proved its ruin, for the American Lithograph Company saw that they were assisting in the making of a great property and proceeded to acquire it by purchase, giving Hall a large cheque for his interest.

Now as every one who has ever had anything to do with color printing knows, a lithographer seldom knows anything except "register"—meaning the adjustment of colors—and the game of pinochle, and the Blakeley Hall régime was succeeded by one of dark ignorance. I still contributed to the paper and the experience was a valuable one, for through it I began to learn why even successful business men usually fail when they undertake an enterprise like a theatre or a magazine that should be dominated by literary or artistic influences.

Later experiences in my life more than confirmed this impression.

Elated by their acquisition on reasonable terms of what was rapidly growing into a very valuable property —the profits of *Puck* were at this time enormous—the pinochle players laid aside their decks for a time and proceeded to business. Their first editor was a young man,

not devoid of ability, who loomed large in their eyes because he had devised a system for keeping the office accounts, so far as they related to the dealings with artists and writers, every item of which he entered in a set of books and in ink of five different colors. A man who could do that, they thought, would make an excellent editor. His successor was a Hungarian who could not write the English language but was known to them as a maker of choice underwear and they reasoned that his conduct of the magazine was quite likely to equal, if not to excel, the skill which produced their favorite undershirts. This man's artistic ideals were not exalted. He kept hidden under his desk a bock beer sign representing a goat drinking from a foaming glass. It was printed on highly-glazed cardboard and when an artist offered a drawing in color this art editor would examine it critically—by which I mean he would hold it right side up—feel of it with his thumb and say: "This ain't smooth enough. Bring around something as smooth as this and I'll talk business with you." And he would haul the bock beer sign from its hiding-place.

There was one lithographer, a rare hand in "melding queens," or whatever pinochlers do, who was always prowling about the office, looking suspiciously over the shoulder of the honest book-keeper and listening to everything that was said, and it was he who drew the cheques for the payment of contributors. I had written a series of papers which I afterward collected in book form under the title of "The Literary Shop," and it happened one day that the current editor advised that I should be asked to write a review of a certain new book and, in order to

prove my worth, handed his chief a copy of my own work which he took home to read.

Afterward the editor told me that he had expressed surprise at the nature of my writing, as he had no idea that I did work of that sort, and to this I made answer: "You may tell him that he himself drew the cheque that paid for each and every one of those chapters."

It seemed to me at the time strange that a group of successful business men should entrust the duties of a buyer to one who did not know what he was buying, and scarcely less credible was their appointment as art director of a man who regarded a bock beer sign as the highest expression of art.

My next experience came about in this fashion. A young man of a vacant expression of countenance was introduced to me as one having need of my services. He explained that he had obtained the necessary financial backing from a source so high that he did not care to name it, for a satirical weekly which he desired me to edit, admitting frankly that I knew more about the matter than he did. With joyful enthusiasm I undertook the work and I can assure my readers that it was a very difficult thing to obtain good comic pictures and literary matter for a new venture. However, I managed to get together several passably good efforts, but by this time the vacant-faced young man had discovered that he knew more than I did, so he substituted for some of the things that I had secured examples of his own taste. It was about this time also that I began to realize that I had been very foolish to have anything to do with him.

"I don't think much of this stuff you're buying," he

said to me one day. "There's a fellow named Stevenson who seems to be all the go just now. Can't you get something from him?"

This "fellow" was Robert Louis Stevenson in the first flush of his great fame, and, indeed, "all the go," for his work in *Scribner's Magazine* was attracting widespread attention. I explained as tactfully as I could, that I did not think he would come on from Edinburgh to earn ten dollars from us.

A few days later it became necessary to have some matter set up in type at the cost of about twenty-five dollars, and I was directed to entrust the work to my employer's brother-in-law who had a large printing office. When I made known the nature of my business and the name of my backer the printer burst into a roar of laughter, turned to his partner and said: "What do you think? My brother-in-law, Charlie, wants us to trust him for twenty-five dollars." Whereat the partner laughed even more heartily.

I have related these two apparently insignificant anecdotes in order to indicate the commercial rating in Bradstreet's, and the literary taste of the young man who had been entrusted by men of large affairs with the task of preparing a sample number of a satirical publication. Well, we prepared that sample number and a worthless thing it was too, and not until then did I learn that our backers were members of the Sugar Trust. Wisely enough the sample was rejected and I failed to get all the money that was due me. One day, while brooding sadly over the affair, I arose and said unto myself, "I don't believe that this fellow had any such backing as

that. I will go and find out for myself." Thereupon, I visited the office of the Sugar Trust, and was received by a gentleman whose name I think was Elder, and who was a person of deaconish aspect with close-cut whiskers like one of the Smith Brothers on the cough drop packages—not the one with the long chin beard, but the other one.

"Yes," he said in reply to my inquiry, "we told this young man to prepare a sample copy of a humorous journal with a view to permanent publication, but the sample he submitted was not satisfactory and we have abandoned the scheme. Of course, we paid him for his trouble and expense."

For a moment I stood gazing at this captain of industry in silent wonder. Then turning on my heel I left his presence forever.

My next essay in humorous journalism died still-born. A friend of mine, with whom I had often discussed the matter, came to me with the information that a certain man of means who was very much interested in municipal and other reform, might be induced to help me and to him I went at once with a card of introduction. He listened with keen interest while I explained my scheme and noted down the probable expenses in minute detail. He impressed me as a very clear-headed man. Suddenly he turned to me and said: "But it seems to me, Mr. Ford, that if I went into this thing on the terms you mention, and it proved successful, you would be making a great deal of money." To which I made answer that I thought I would in that event be entitled to it. From that moment he seemed to lose interest in the matter and never re-

ferred to the subject again. Some years later I found that he had considered the proposition more seriously than I had supposed, for a friend of mine told me that soon after our interview he had been bidden to dine with him and two or three other men, and discuss the feasibility of starting a magazine very much on the lines that I had suggested and from which I was to be left out. I think my aversion to reformers dates from my acquaintance with this one.

My next venture was with a weekly called *Vanity*, started by the sons of Eugene Kelly, a wealthy Irish banker, but Nugent Robinson had arrived in the office ahead of me. Robinson was an agreeable, smooth-talking Celt and the younger Kellys, Eugene and Thomas, were easy-going fellows who cheerfully provided the requisite funds. I was appointed manager, Robinson being already installed as editor, and when I opened the cash drawer of the office safe I found in it less money than due bills, signed for the most part by the Kellys' hangers-on.

With zeal unabated by previous mishaps I proposed to illustrate the journal, but Robinson held up his hands in horror saying: "Don't say the word to the Kelly boys! I told them illusthrations would kill it. Summer is coming on and we want peace and quiet. We can't have these artists thracking in and out with their portfolios and disturbin' our rest."

Vanity was a purposeless, inane publication which cost its projectors about twenty thousand dollars and finally perished, but not until I had been removed from office by the subtle craft, as I suspected, of some of the signers of the due bills in the safe.

My last experience in satirical journalism was as editor and manager of the *Porcupine,* the backer of which was Robert B. Van Cortlandt. At my advice we started it as a monthly, with the intention of subsequently issuing it once a week, and I can recommend this course to any one contemplating a like enterprise. My many experiences had taught me the difficulty of obtaining good literary and artistic matter for a new and uncertain venture, and I knew that it was much better to print one fairly good number a month instead of four weak ones, to say nothing of the great saving in expense. I hope I may be pardoned if I speak a little boastfully of my conduct of the *Porcupine.* We started with everything against us, including the postal laws, the gradual rise in the cost of production and the fact that our country entered into the war before we issued our second number.

I could not pay high prices, but I had at my elbow certain old friends who knew how to write and were glad to help me. I engaged J. Norman Lynd, of the *Herald,* as cartoonist, and we worked together in making cartoons that attracted no small attention and stamped him as one of the most promising members of the craft in the city. Among the friends for whose assistance I am grateful were Colonel H. G. Prout, Ernest Harvier and Anne O'Hagan Shinn. Our subscription list was small, but of such a high class, that when I showed it to the leading publishers of the town, I was able to get about the only advertising that we ever obtained, for that source of supply ceased abruptly with the beginning of the war.

I may mention that in embarking on this enterprise I called on Mr. Hart, the manager of the American News Company, to arrange for the circulation of the paper, and found him very pessimistic as to results. "I hope," he said, "that you have at the very least one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in capital."

"Mr. Hart," I replied, "I have discussed similar ventures with persons for the last thirty years, and in every case the individual addressed has wagged his head ominously and said: 'I am afraid this will cost a great deal of money!' Not once have I known any one to wag his head and say: 'I am afraid this will take a great deal of brains!' And yet what makes a publication—money or brains?"

The *Porcupine* marched steadily on for eleven months during which time it had cost Van Cortlandt fifteen thousand dollars. Then we met and discussed the whole matter thoroughly, the result being that although he had been despondent of success from the very first he now admitted that we were on the right track and authorized me to order a two years' supply of paper. I never saw him again. Ten days later he died by his own hand, and at his funeral in Mt. Kisco his lawyer told me that Van Cortlandt had recently consulted him in regard to some changes in his will, saying that he was going away on a long journey and that he intended to set aside for me all the *Porcupine* stock and a sufficient amount of money to put it on its feet. Although he had always been careful to take up the stock certificates whenever he advanced money, neither those certificates nor the securities were ever found. The eclipse of the *Porcupine*

was the first of a series of disasters to myself to which I have referred in the first chapter of these memoirs, and which need not be enumerated as they concern only myself.

These disheartening experiences have not been wholly lost on me, for I have distilled from them a knowledge of those scientific pursuits whose goal is other people's money, and I am certain that there are mines of wealth in New York as yet untouched by the pick and shovel of art and letters. I have even taken pains to supplement this knowledge by watching the stream of money that was poured into that stockholders' dream, the New Theatre; the lesser sum that carried *Harper's Weekly* down the years of its obscure senility and lodged it on the bleak shore of the *Independent;* and even the smaller amount that enabled the now forgotten Theatre of Arts and Letters to draw its first and its last breath. This wealth of information I cheerfully bestow upon my younger contemporaries, confessing with mortification that its proper employment requires steadier nerve and bolder heart than mine.

I would say to him who wishes to obtain financial backing to such a venture, for example, as a magazine, first devise a hopeless scheme; then inspire further confidence in your ability to make a complete mess of it by revealing your own unbroken record of incompetency.

The bunco-steerer of an elder day always recognized a possible victim in the stranger who walked the Bowery looking at the tops of the buildings. Your most likely backer is one who, with eyes fixed on Olympian heights, babbles of the intellectual drama, of the little understood

literature of remotely alien peoples, and, in the case of some whose sincerity I respect and whose folly I deplore, of philanthropy and the civic virtues.

It was with eyes that turned upward that a fat man called Lorillard Spencer once came down from Newport to establish in New York a magazine of high art, little knowing the capabilities in that line of our own illustrators, one of whom actually sold him a copy of Knauss' "Holy Family" for an original picture. Mr. Spencer's regrettable discovery that this work of art was known to every man, woman and child in the metropolis except himself, spoiled the market for Cole's "Voyage of Life," and "The Deathbed of Abraham Lincoln," then in course of hasty preparation for unloading.

Any man of the sort I have indicated is your meat. Bait your hook with a circular outlining your plan, which must be for elevating or improving something or somebody, and print in bold type your carefully selected staff of incompetents. Do not fear to say that the disintegration of the last of the Shaker communities in Massachusetts has enabled you to secure the services of Elder Pokebonnet as dramatic critic; that fashion and society will be conducted by Susan Rivet, late secretary of the Lady Boilermakers' Association of Jersey City, with the light satiric touch for which she is famous; and that modern fiction will be reviewed by President Sombretomb of the Freshwater, Indiana, University.

Having secured through this irresistible appeal to "hard-headed business men" the necessary funds, you must devote yourself to the task of pleasing them, keeping constantly in mind the fact that they will examine

your publication with scrupulous care. That is to say they will look at it, feel of it, smell of it, heft it, count the pages and listen to their crisp rattling—do everything, in short, except read it and understand its contents.

I have neither the space nor, I confess, the requisite knowledge for a thorough consideration of the learned profession called "stringing them along," in its many complicated phases and its marvelous operation on the mind contained in the "hard head." It embraces such methods as the resurrection of moss-grown and mouldy devices like poetry contests and the giving of prizes to new subscribers; cheerful alacrity in the puffing of virtuous young actresses; a judicious distribution of theatre tickets and, in event of desperate necessity, an introduction behind the scenes of a theatre.

And to these kindly words of counsel I would add, in the most solemn and impressive language at my command, that the manner in which Teutonic statecraft sought to stem the rising tide of hatred in this country through the medium of the *New York Daily Mail* carries with it a message of hope to the dullest tyro in strategic finance. Read, Oh ye of faint heart, how hands so clumsy that they had already brought disaster to the plow-share trade extracted from those marvels of efficiency, Germany's leading financiers and statesmen, hundreds of thousands of dollars for a scheme of propaganda demanding the wisdom of the ape and the cunning of a Cavour! Read and wonder at the beneficence of a Creator who has placed such men on earth!

CHAPTER XX

THE happenings of the second decade of the century are so fresh in the public memory that neither comment nor recital should have place in these memoirs of by-gone years. 'Twere better, therefore, that I devote my remaining pages to considering some of the men and women I have known and some of the scenes I have witnessed since I first came upon the metropolitan turf. The science of publicity, which has a far greater influence on public opinion than the layman is aware of, renders it difficult to distinguish between those famous through their own achievement and the much larger number who have bought their laurels at the nearest shop in which those adornments are hawked. Of the last-named class many have partaken so freely of the cup, intoxicating to men and poisonous to women, that they honestly believe themselves famous and declare their faith in a manner so convincing as to deceive the biographer.

Far up the heights of Olympus there is a snow-line where the pleasant verdure of praise ceases and the traveler encounters the cold blasts of carping criticism. Mary Anderson withered before those blasts many years ago and our stage knew her no more. It is believed that it was a single icy blast sweeping down from Scotland

that killed the sensitive soul of the poet Keats. I remember reading a letter from Edwin Booth in which he said, referring to a venomous attack, that he felt he had reached a point in his career at which he must expect no more fulsome praise. Curiously enough it is at this snow-line where laudation ends that posthumous fame begins. There are two ways by which a truth-loving commentator may procure for himself the triumph of being scorned by the cognoscenti of New York. One is by exposing to contumely some successful fake, the other is by speaking highly of a traveler who has passed the snow-line in his journey up the Olympian heights, and is not yet dead.

A woman who was not only one of the greatest players of her time, but one of rare intellectual gifts as well, was Madame Sarah Bernhardt, whom I never knew very well but who made a deep impression on me whenever I happened to have a few moments' conversation with her. On one occasion I went with an old friend of hers to call on her at her hotel and found her so wearied from a long and arduous rehearsal, that we decided at once to shorten our call.

"I am a grandmother for the second time!" she exclaimed as we entered, holding out a cablegram containing the news of the birth of a child to her son's wife.

"I have an invitation for you, Madame," said my companion. "Mr. Conried desires to give a performance in your special honor and wishes you to name the play you would like to see."

Madame Bernhardt started forward with real enthusiasm, saying, "That is very kind of Mr. Conried. Please tell him that I shall be delighted to accept his invitation." Then, turning to me she added: "One can always learn so much from a good German company." And I was glad to know that one of the most distinguished actresses in the world could set an example of modesty to some of our younger and inferior stars by being anxious to learn something at the moment when she was twice a grandmother.

A player of our own country whom I knew very slightly and wish that I had known better was Edwin Booth, who, despite his great reputation was, in my opinion, superior to it in character, talent and modesty. So far as I can learn, he never revealed the clay feet and was undoubtedly a hero to his valet. On one occasion, at the dinner table of a mutual friend, the conversation turned on the reading of a certain passage in Hamlet and, naturally enough, we looked to Mr. Booth for his opinion.

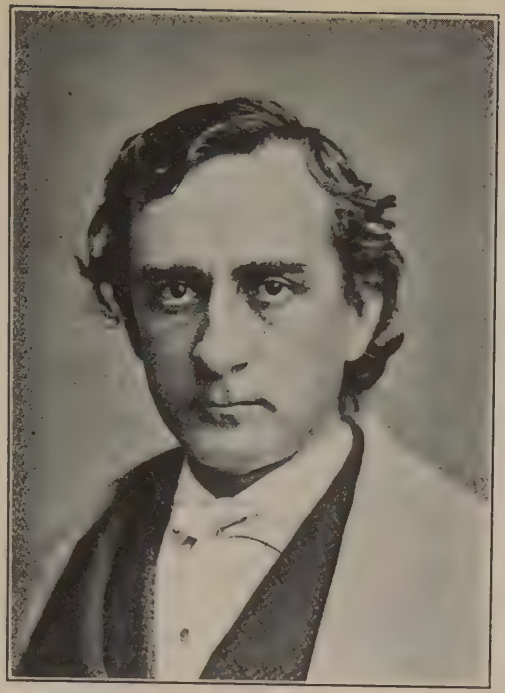
"It's a curious thing," he said, "but unless I'm on the stage I find it very difficult to remember the reading of lines that I may have recited a thousand times. My recollection is, though, that the passage should be read in this fashion. What is your opinion, Mr. Ford?" I am glad to say that in the presence of such an authority I had no opinion.

Mr. Booth's generosity to members of his own calling was proverbial, but he was consistently reticent regarding his many acts of charity. Laurence Hutton told me that he called on him once at the Players' Club and

found him entertaining a very old actor whom he had invited to come on from Philadelphia to spend the day with him. As his guests departed, Hutton remarked: "I hear that the old gentleman has managed to pay the mortgage on his little property and is comfortable for life." "Yes," rejoined Mr. Booth, "that is true. Isn't it pleasant to think that the old man is free from care?"

Two or three years later Hutton related the incident to Louis Aldrich, giving Booth as his authority. "So Booth told you that the mortgage was paid, but did he tell you who paid it? No? Then I'll tell you. It was paid by Booth himself."

Although I do not claim to be an authority on intellect, I think I may safely say that John Fiske—he hated to be called "Professor" Fiske—was the most intellectual man I have ever known and unquestionably one of the greatest Americans of his generation. Mr. Spencer Clark has in his notable biography of Mr. Fiske re-created him from the circumstances of his career very much as a naturalist re-creates a pre-historic animal from a few scattered bones. The Fiske whom this author has drawn is the one whom I came to know very well during the season that I managed his lectures in New York. Like other great men, Mr. Fiske was ingenuously modest. I asked him once if he had enjoyed his visit to England. "Well, brother Ford," he said, "when I first arrived there, I was so homesick thinking of my wife and children that I used to lie awake at night and cry until the pillow was wet, but in the course of a week some of those who had read my books and knew of me began to call—Mr. Darwin, Mr. Tyndall, Mr. Huxley—



Edwin Booth, the Leading Shakespearean Actor of His Day

Mrs. Scott-Siddons of the Famous Theatrical Family of Siddons

and invited me to dinner and before I knew it I was having a most delightful time."

He mentioned these names as if they had been Brown, Jones and Robinson, and without the slightest intention of impressing me. It did not occur to him that he was the only American living on whom those three most distinguished of men would have called during the first week of his stay in London.

I well remember his comment on Trumbull's painting of Washington crossing the Delaware. "A good picture, brother Ford, but the American flag was not invented then."

If Mr. Fiske were vain of anything it was of his accomplishments as a vocalist, concerning which I will say nothing except that he thought he could sing. He was, however, a composer of no small merit, I am told. Possessed of unusual social gifts he found genuine enjoyment in many different classes of society and could actually make American history fascinating across the table. He had a strong regard for Henry Irving and Miss Terry and delighted in visiting them behind the scenes.

A friendship that I prized more than any that I have had the good fortune to enjoy and which extended over a period of fully thirty years, was that of Mr. William Dean Howells, of whose goodness of heart, fine idealism and generous sympathy with young men of letters, it is impossible for me to say too much. He was, indeed, up to the time of his death, the Dean of American literature and some of his earlier books, *The Hazard of New Fortunes, The Rise of Silas Lapham* and *A Modern In-*

stance, deserve to live like those of Jane Austen, as faithful pictures of the times that they portray.

Mr. Howells' keen sense of humor, rare social qualities and lively interest in the men and women whom he knew, remained with him to the last. He called on me not many months before his death and I marvelled then at the manner in which he had retained those qualities in their pristine freshness well into the ninth decade of his life. I doubt if any one who really knew him will arise to dispute my estimate of him.

One evening, many years ago, I was talking politics with Thomas J. Creamer, an old-fashioned Tammany politician who was then serving the state in Albany. "There's a young man who's just come into the Legislature that you want to keep an eye on," said Creamer. "He's on the opposite side from me but that don't affect my judgment and I tell you the country is going to hear from him one of these days. He's on the level and has got the makings of a good politician and that's a combination you don't meet with every day. Comes from a big New York family but he don't show it in his manner. You want to keep an eye on young Theodore Roosevelt."

I am not the only man in America who has kept an eye on Theodore Roosevelt since then and as years went on I came to know him quite well. The first time I met him I felt that I was talking to a man, and that impression never left me during the many years of our acquaintance, even after I had come to recognize his faults. So much has been said and written of Roosevelt that his character need not be discussed here and I shall

say nothing of him except that he had a magnificent laugh that came from far below his collar-button—such a laugh as proclaims sincerity.

Mrs. Grover Cleveland, whom I knew slightly in Washington, at the time of the Authors' Readings, given in aid of international copyright, impressed me as one of the rare specimens of her sex to whom the cup of publicity was not a poisonous and demoralizing draught, no matter how frequently it was pressed to her unseeking lips. For all I could see, the fact that she was more conspicuously in the public eye than any woman in her position had ever been had absolutely no effect on her.

At the time when I was engaged in writing a boys' book about fire-fighting, *The Third Alarm,* I came to know Chief John J. Bresnan very well, indeed. As a typical modern fireman, Bresnan well deserves mention in my chronicles of New York. Of Irish parentage and reared in the old Fourth Ward, he began to run after the fire engines as soon as he could toddle and at the age of seven constructed a toy machine which he used to drag after the engines as soon as the alarm was given. He attached himself to the volunteer service as soon as he was old enough and remained with it until its disbandment, when he entered the paid department. With the exception of a brief term of service in the army during the Civil War, Bresnan never did anything to the end of his days but fight fires and devise new schemes for obtaining better efficiency. He was a man of such limited education that I doubt if he could pass some of the present day civil service examinations, for he used to say "conflaggeration." It is quite true that he could

put one out as quickly and effectively as any man on the force but he could never learn to pronounce the word properly.

Bresnan was still a young man when the disastrous Brooklyn Theatre fire occurred and it turned his attention to places of public amusement. Richard Watson Gilder once said of him that he understood the beginning and progress of fires as a botanist understands the growth and development of a flower from its seed to its full fruition. Bresnan set to work on this matter and never rested until he had secured the ordinance compelling the presence of a fireman on the stage during every performance and the making of proper vents in the roofs of buildings designed for public assembly. Thanks to his efforts New York has never had since then a theatre fire while the audience was in the house. Several theatres have burned down but always when they were empty.

Not only a typical fireman, but also a typical product of the old-fashioned respectable Irish element of the lower wards, Bresnan was thoroughly familiar with the history of New York and with every phase of its life. He used to spend his days-off in wandering about the city, studying the public buildings with a view to future needs and even ascertaining the exact location of all sleeping quarters. The knowledge thus gained came into play when he was summoned on one occasion to a fire that had broken out in St. Francis Xavier's College in West Fifteenth Street. Entering the place at the head of his men he saw at a glance that the flames that had started in the basement were evidently filling the upper

Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Whom Publicity Could not Spoil

Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison, Known to the Reading World as *Lucas Malet*

rooms with smoke and he demanded of the priest who met him where the staircase was.

"You don't want the staircase," rejoined the cleric; "the fire's downstairs!"

"Git to hell outer dis!" cried the fire chief as he pushed the other aside and made a rush for the upper rooms, arriving just in time to drag one of the brothers to safety.

Beneath the fireman s uniform lay a very tender heart. Whenever the alarm came from the neighborhood in which he lived with his orphaned children, he started at once without even waiting for his driver and invariably explained his haste with the remark: "Dey ain't got no mudder, yer know."

A strong love of the theatre was ingrained in him and developed by his frequent visits to playhouses, both in front and back of the footlights. One of his favorite plays was Bronson Howard's *Shenandoah* and there was one brief scene in it that so affected him that although he had witnessed it many times from behind the scenes, he found himself unable to endure its pathos unmoved and would go out during its progress, excusing himself by the remark: "It kinder makes me fill up."

Bresnan died as he could have wished to die, at a great fire in West Twenty-third Street, with the hose nozzle in his hand. His funeral, in the church that he had once helped to save, was attended by one of the most remarkable assemblies of people I have ever seen.

CHAPTER XXI

I HAVE but scant respect for what is termed the "higher criticism" when applied to the stage. I hold that it is impossible for the cloistered academic mind, and difficult for the cultivated one, to understand, appreciate or even enjoy the theatre, that is to say in the full sense of those terms. The stage is the sport of democracy, not of the aristocracy of learning. Its appeal is not to culture, which is scarce, but to the elemental feelings common to us all—to the emotions, risibilities, sense of justice of the great sympathetic world, the world that dearly loves a lover.

Callow academic thought delights in "showing off" its familiarity with Russian and Scandinavian dramatic literature for the enlightenment of those persons who think they think. Its manner of so doing is that of a precocious child harassing its elders with parlor recitations. The riper scholastic mind loves to brood over the Shakespearean drama, and undoubtedly appreciates its "three-centuried wit that kept so well," as one of our poets has put it, its philosophy, its matchless literary splendor—everything, in short, save the quality, often sneeringly called "stage carpentering" that has kept it alive so many years. The taste for Shakespeare will never perish from off the face of the earth. It comes and goes like the April rains and flourishes best in dull

times when men have time to think. The most successful presentation in English of "Julius Caesar" of my time was that given in the midst of a period of stagnation and in the theatre in which Edwin Booth had sunk his entire fortune during New York's "Flash Age" of riotous money-spending. But even in its off years this form of entertainment can always command an audience of humbler folk. That astute manager and able actor, the lamented Harry Donnelly, told me that during his tenancy of the low-priced Murray Hill Theatre Shakespeare was his most popular author and that he devoted one-tenth of his season to his dramas.

But the production of these classics is not the difficult feat ascribed to it by the most mature academic thought. Every scene has long since been thoroughly tried out so as to obtain the best dramatic results and every rôle comes down to us from the ages so encrusted with the most effective "business" that the ingenuity of generations of players and managers could devise, that no actor of even modest ability can go wholly astray.

A far more perilous undertaking is the production of drama of the moment and the delineation of characters absolutely new to the footlights. That is a task calculated to try the souls of manager and player.

The scholastic mind is a firm believer in what it terms the "higher intellectual drama" and the "intellectual acting" in which it seeks expression. Its conception of the first-named is confined to literary excellence which has very little to do with drama; and as for the other, such a thing does not exist. Acting comes by instinct and that instinct is God-given, just as a perception of form

and color is bestowed on the painter and a sense of harmony on the musician. A great actor may or may not be intellectual, but that quality has very little to do with his acting. Madame Bernhardt is a woman of intellect as well as a superb artist, while on the other hand that incomparable tragedian, Salvini, made but one comment when he read "Macbeth" for the first time, and that was that "Macbeth himself ought to have the sleep-walking scene." Salvini was essentially of the theatre.

I did not intend these memoirs to become anything in the way of an *"Apologia pro vita mea,"* but I feel justified in saying something about dramatic criticism, an occupation that has yielded me part of my livelihood. Largely speaking, Broadway philosophy knows but two kinds of criticism, labelled respectively in the quaint argot of that school of thought, the "knock" and the "boost," from which comes that epigram of balm to the wounded, "every knock a boost." The former never fails to awaken bitter resentment; the latter gives the critic brief respect as one who "knows what he is writing about." Nevertheless I have never known any one to be ruined by even the most malicious attacks, and I have seen scores put under the sod by the undeserved or bought and paid for puffery that provokes abnormal self-esteem and effectively stops all artistic growth.

Far greater injustice is done by critics so ignorant of the theatre that they cannot distinguish between the work of the dramatist and that of the player, and if I have ever been unjust it was through just such ignorance, or because I favored some actor with whom I was on friendly terms. And yet it is impossible to know the

stage by merely studying it across the footlights. It is only through constant association with its people that one arrives at a real comprehension of the theatre. And before I leave the confessional I will rid my soul of a sin that has lain heavy on it for many a year. I once wrote an article for a woman's magazine in exuberant praise of a play by Charles Rann Kennedy, simply because I needed the money.

I have been ridiculed for attaching too much importance to the art of listening or "feeding," as it is termed on the variety stage, as practiced by actors playing together, and I should explain that in theatrical parlance the term signifies acquiring knowledge of what is going on not only through the ear, but by the other senses as well and revealing to the audience the immediate effect of that knowledge. It has even been said that listening is my hobby, which is quite true, and I may add that I keep it saddled and bridled in my mental stable ready for use; nor should I care to see any one else ride it.

Everybody knows the value of a good listener at the social board and how an inattentive one can spoil the best told tale. In the hands of an accomplished player listening is raised to the dignity of a fine art capable of intensifying, and even creating the dramatic interest of a scene; therefore, let us consider what certain successful players have had to say on the subject: Two women of great technical skill—May Irwin and Marie Tempest—have assured me in precisely the same words that "listening is nine-tenths of acting." When Clara Morris tried to give Augustin Daly an idea of the powers of Henry Irving, whom she had seen in London in "The Bells,"

she brought her eulogy to a climax with the exclamation, "God, how he listened!" Consider also the words of the great and wise Duse: "The finest moment of an actress is, not when she is speaking, but when she is listening." Nor should we forget that a parrot can be taught to speak, but not to listen.

I will quote another remark of equal sagacity, although it has not the familiar ring of culture, which came to me once from the lips of illiterate but genuine authority, and I confess that in my ignorance I smiled contemptuously when I heard it. As I was leaving the play-house at the close of the professional matinée given by Madame Bernhardt during her first New York engagement I heard a song and dance man say: "Gee! but she's a great feeder!" Scholastic thought had previously busied itself with everything that was visible and obvious in Bernhardt's art, but it remained for this man, bred on the variety stage where "feeding" or listening is reckoned at its true value, to get at the very heart of it.

There is one historic scene constructed by that peerless master of what the unlearned sneeringly term "mere stage carpentering," which shows the relative values of listening and the sounds that provoke it. In the scene of the knocking at the gate in "Macbeth" the knocking can be done by call-boy or property man as effectively as by a Forrest or a Salvini, but the sound would be meaningless were not Macbeth and Lady Macbeth on the scene, listening, not only with their ears, but with guilty consciences as well, and by the terror written on their faces translating the ominous message so as to make it intelligible to even the dullest comprehension. It would be hard to name a

greater moment for either player. The dramatic interest thus skilfully aroused ceases when the two leave the stage and are succeeded by a sleepy porter, in whose ears the sound has no significance and who therefore merely hears instead of listening.

It seems to me eminently fitting that I should acknowledge here my indebtedness to that fine artist, Miss Marie Tempest, who first made clear to me the wide difference betwen hearing and listening.

Looking back on my more than a half century of theatre-going, I come upon many bits of acting that are still vividly graven in my memory and nearly every one of these was dominated by listening.

It must be nearly thirty-five years ago that I first saw Salvini as Othello and what impressed me more than anything else in that memorable performance was the scene in which Iago implanted in the Moor suspicions of Desdemona's faithlessness. This has always been considered Iago's scene but in this case he might have been a phonograph, so completely did Salvini dominate the stage. And yet all that Othello did was to listen while the other talked. But, "God, how he listened!" As the treacherous friend talked the other circled about him as a panther might move about its cage, walking with catlike step and showing in his face the growth of rage and jealousy in his heart. It was his listening that held his audience in such a grasp that if any thought was bestowed on Iago it was to marvel at his temerity in rousing such terrible passions. And when the great actor turned suddenly upon the accuser—I think he threw him

to the ground—and poured out on him a torrent of Italian invective, the audience literally shuddered.

A friend to whom I described this scene not long ago was good enough to compliment me on my memory, but in my opinion the credit is due not to my memory but to the superb actor who left on it an enduring record of his art.

Another scene that I recall almost as vividly was that played by Ludwig Barnay as Mark Antony in his address to the Roman citizens. The theatrical profession has always regarded this scene as one that "plays itself" as their idiom has it, but in this case it was played as it should be, not only by Antony, but by every member of the mob who heard him. There were at this time so many players in the Thalia Theatre company that it was easy to recruit the mob from those for the moment unemployed, among whom were many of skill and experience. There were but few of these on the stage when Antony ascended the rostrum but they assembled rapidly as a mob does assemble, many of them being in character. A baker would pause for a moment to listen and then set down his basket and remain. A beggar would approach to solicit alms, then let fall his outstretched palm and become absorbed in the speaker's words. So the mob gathered till the great stage was filled.

There was an artifice in the assembling of the crowd that was not apparent to the spectator, for Barnay and several others had played in the company of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen—in my opinion the greatest Shakespearean producer of his time—and his methods were followed here. The players were divided into groups

of three, one of whom was a superior actor who directed the work of his two subordinates, while Conried in the garb of a common Roman citizen, circulated among the crowd and kept an eye on everything.

Although I have never seen the fact mentioned by any of the commentators, it has always seemed to me that Shakespeare was keenly alive to the value of listening, for it enters into every one of his notable scenes. William Hazlitt once said that to realize the possibilities of human genius one should read Shakespeare and that to comprehend the littleness of the human mind the writings of his commentators should be pursued. Even De Quincey, in his essay on "The Knocking at the Gate" in "Macbeth" goes no deeper than the effect on the audience of a mysterious sound.

But I did not intend to range myself among the commentators and for aught I know everything that I have said has been said by men wiser than myself many times before. I only wished to record my own impressions of the playing of this great scene on the Thalia stage and to explain the opportunities that it offers to actors who know their business.

In the Forum scene we find this art in its highest development and in the form of what I might call "cross-listening," for as the mob listens to Antony's words, so does he listen to all that is said and by keenly watching their faces learn the effect of his words. In Barnay's hands the scene marched on with ever-increasing dramatic interest until the mob, at first inclined to think that "t'were better that he speak no ill of Brutus here," was roused to vengeance. I shall never forget the manner in

which he paused for a moment, scanned the faces of his auditors with a quick, searching look that told him that his great moment had come, and then suddenly tearing the cloth from the bier cried out: "Kind friends, what, weep you when you but behold our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here! Here is himself, marred, as you see, by traitors!" And at the close of the scene when the mob, inflamed by his words, went streaming up the stage, on vengeance bent, one could easily believe that mischief was indeed afoot.

Another great performance that I have witnessed was that of Edwin Booth in *Hamlet,* and the scene that impressed me the most was his reading of the Soliloquy. I have seen actors of limited ability, and but scant comprehension of Shakepeare's meaning, address these lines to the audience, or else, so read them, as to convey the impression that they were talking to themselves. But Mr. Booth knew well that as he was alone on the stage he must listen to himself, and he did listen, in such a manner as to reflect on his mobile face the meaning of his words. He told me once that while playing in the Sandwich Islands his Hamlet always attracted scores of the most intelligent of the natives and that these, although they did not understand a word of English, gave him the best audiences he had ever had for his Soliloquy. "They seemed to understand it all," he added. He told me also, on this occasion, that although his tour in the Sandwich Islands was eminently successful, he experienced great difficulty in getting his bills posted as the natives to whom the work was entrusted used to throw away the paper and eat the paste. "My actors," he continued,

"were such gentlemen that I could not ask them to do it, so I had to put them up myself and many a time, after playing Hamlet or Romeo I have gone out in the moonlight and stuck up those bills with my own hand."

Mr. Booth, as well as myself, had been deeply impressed by the work of the Meininger Company, whom he saw in London. "In fact," he said to me, "I was so much absorbed by and interested in what was done by that great listening mob that I did not pay much attention to anything else."

I hope I am not conveying the impression that I knew this great actor intimately for I never met him more than two or three times, but I still remember nearly everything that he said on those occasions, and I sincerely wish that it had been my good fortune to know him better.

A more recent actor whose work has given me infinite pleasure is Mr. George Arliss, unforgettable both as Disraeli and as the War Minister in *The Darling of the Gods*. The latter personation I have always regarded as the most effective in his repertoire, just as I considered Mr. Booth's Bertucchio in *The Fool's Revenge*, the most effective in his, though not perhaps so scholarly as his Hamlet. Mr. Arliss does not agree with me in this estimate of his work, but a true artist's opinion of what he does himself is not always impeccable. It was the rôle that I have named that gave him his first great vogue in this country, although he had previously won the commendation of the discerning while in the company of Mrs. Patrick Campbell. His engagement for the part came about in this manner, I am told. Belasco

fully realized the vital importance of the part and was looking about him for some one to play it when chance led him to the theatre in which Arliss was playing in Mrs. Campbell's support, light modern comedy. According to my informant—theatrical legendry need not be scrutinized too closely—Belasco watched him during one scene and then proceeded to engage him for this tragic rôle, knowing well that he could play it.

Mr. Arliss' work in the parts that I have named and in his others as well is too familiar to the present generation to bear recital here, so I need only add that his Disraeli, with which his name is thoroughly identified, was a well-studied and altogether delightful piece of acting and that his resemblance to the great statesman was so striking that his first appearance on the scene had an almost sensational effect. Another performance of his that was marked by a degree of personal distinction rare enough on our stage was his Marquis of Steyne in Mrs. Fiske's *Becky Sharp*.

When Lord Bryce, who had known Disraeli well, saw Mr. Arliss in that rôle he was deeply impressed by the actor's likeness to the great prime minister which, by the way, was largely due to a close study of the Tenniel cartoons, a set of which hung on the walls of his dressing-room. Lord Bryce considered the resemblance perfect save in one particular. Disraeli's face was always immobile, he said, and no emotion, no heat of controversy ever brought to it the slightest change of expression. Mr. Arliss, on the contrary, constantly reflected in his face that which was going on about him. His Lordship's criticism is worth recording but not following, for the

Mr. George Arliss, as *Disraeli*, in the Play of That Name

expression on the player's mobile face was the result of his acute listening and the absolute essential of his art.

Another performance that I remember vividly and which was also based on listening was that of Miss Frances Starr in *The Easiest Way*. Her part was very long and I think that during the second act she was on the stage the entire time. It is true that the credit for her performance is not due entirely to her own work, for she had the three-fold advantage of Mr. Eugene Walter's fine drama, Mr. Belasco's skilful stage management and a company that gave her admirable support. Nevertheless her ability as a listener had much to do with compelling the interest of the audience and bringing out the efforts of her associates to such a degree that every part in the play made a distinct impression. In other words, Miss Starr was not above feeding her fellow-players, and I may add that it was her ability to listen displayed in a piece called *Gallops* that first attracted Mr. Belasco's attention and led to his engaging her as a star. I mention this latter fact for the benefit of those débutantes who think it more important to talk than to listen and who do not know that there is a wide difference between listening and merely hearing.

Mr. William H. Thompson is an actor whom I have always greatly admired and one who has had a very strong personal following among sophisticated play-goers. Local stage legendry ascribes to him many brilliant character bits, many of which I have seen myself, but the part that stands out vividly in my memory was the Cardinal in *The Royal Family*. It was an exquisite piece of work, dignified, lovable and spiritual and conveying

an idea of what a Prince of the Church should be. The scene that I best remember was that in which, while apparently dozing in his chair, he was nevertheless keenly listening.

As to the players of farce and comedy my memory is rich in countless hours of enjoyment. Johnny Wild made me laugh more than any actor that I ever saw. English by birth, he created an entirely new stage character, the New York Negro, who is altogether different from the clog-dancing plantation darky of old-time minstrelsy. Long before he joined Harrigan and Hart, he and his partner, Billy Gray, had made an enviable reputation in variety and both men became valuable additions to the new company. As Captain Sim Primrose of the Skidmore Guards, as a colored barber and as "Lemons the Bum," Wild was irresistibly funny.

There are many elderly theatre-goers who cherish among their most treasured memories the performance of that most exquisite comedy actress, Rosina Vokes, in *A Pantomime Rehearsal,* and I will warrant that the scene they recall the most vividly is that in which she tried to impart some faint comprehension of the art of acting to a dull-witted, fashionable amateur. "God, how she listened!" as that stupid creature read the lines of the popular song, "I know a charming fellow, la de da—" which she pronounced "lady day!" And how as she listened her face revealed the growing conviction that it would be impossible to teach her anything! She surveyed her pupil despairingly as an Alpine climber might survey a yawning crevasse while realizing the impossibility of crossing it. If she spoke during the scene I

Mr. Johnny Wild of Harrigan and Hart's Company; Creator of the Modern New York Negro, as Captain of the Skidmore Guards and in Characteristic Garb

have forgotten her words, but I shall never forget the way in which she proved in comedy what Duse has proved in tragedy that the actress's greatest moment is not that in which she talks, but that in which she listens.

A personation of recent years that I recall with peculiar delight is that of Mr. John W. Cope in *The Concert*. I know of no better character actor on our stage to-day than he, but in *The Concert* he seemed to me to excel himself. He played the care-taker of the Catskill bungalow and never before have I seen a man not native to the green sod play an Irishman as he did. I doubt if Dion Boucicault could have done it any better.

Another actress who is an extremely good listener and who learned much of that art by a careful study of the methods of Joe Weber is Miss Katherine Grey, well remembered by her work in support of Richard Mansfield, Charles Coghlan and others. Being a good listener, it is needless to add that Miss Grey is a fine actress.

An interesting example of what it means to be lacking in this art is to be found in the career of Miss Cissy Loftus, an imitator of genius, but not an actress, as she has never learned to listen on the stage. The daughter of Marie Loftus, a famous British music-hall performer, Miss Loftus made a tremendous success in London when she was a very young girl and, so vivid were her imitations of other artists that many managers and playwrights believed she could be made a successful legitimate star. Henry Irving, Augustin Daly and Daniel Frohman engaged her, but in no case did she make good, though in her imitations she was without a peer.

"I saw a rotten bad play last night," said a dramatic writer whom I chanced to meet on Broadway one evening; and the world-weary note in his voice, coupled with the fact that I knew him to be an ass, sent me scurrying to the Garrick Theatre. I arrived at the close of the first act and with no small difficulty edged my way through the crowd assembled to see the "rotten bad play" to a coign of advantage at the rail, to which I clung until the final fall of the curtain. I came early the next night and saw the whole of *Sherlock Holmes,* from beginning to end and forgot that I was standing up. An acquaintance of mine, a police detective whose ability may be measured by the fact that he owns the house in which he lives, remarked disapprovingly as we were leaving the theatre: "That man is not a bit like a real detective," and in thus speaking he uttered a profound truth and paid a high compliment to Mr. Gillette.

At the risk of incurring the contempt of the academic and other scholastic schools of criticism I make bold to express my opinion that *Sherlock Holmes* is a remarkable example of the playwright's craft, and although it may be said that in adapting the work of Conan Doyle for the American stage, Mr. Gillette at the same time dramatized his own mimetic talents, the result is all that concerns the play-goer.

Another thing that he dramatized with the skill that characterizes all his work was the sense of fear that lies dormant in every human soul. It was the apprehension of impending peril that kept me clinging to that brass rail, oblivious to my surroundings, the first time I saw the play, while the whole house listened in the absolute

silence that pays the highest tribute to theatric art. And what better work for the dramatist than the creation of an illusion so gripping that it takes us out of ourselves?

A. M. Palmer told me that at the close of the dress rehearsal of *Jim the Penman,* written almost at a single sitting by Sir Charles Young, he was asked by Louis Massen of the cast what he thought of the play, and to this query made answer: "I think it's the worst piece of rot I ever listened to in my life and I believe I'm on the eve of the most disastrous failure of my career." Even the most expert opinion is liable to go wrong after a rehearsal for nobody save the manager himself considered that play "rot." Agnes Booth's performance was unforgettable. "God, how she listened!" as she read, in absolute silence, the paper that revealed the true character of her husband! It seemed to me that I could watch the course of the knowledge thus gained passing through her eyes into her brain and communicating itself to the audience through her wonderfully mobile face. No better endorsement of Duse's theory on the subject can be imagined than the manner in which this superb American actress listened with all her faculties.

A play that achieved immediate and deserved popularity was *The Thirteenth Chair,* which had tragic results not generally known.

William Harris, who had acquired the rights, was a manager who may be said to have known his business from the ground up for he began his career as a blackface comedian in the early days of variety, and lived to become a member of the powerful Theatrical Syndicate. None of his associates had any faith in the play

and refused to share the risk of it, so he determined to produce it himself, even at the risk of alienating his associates. In company with his wife he attended the first performance and so great was the interest aroused by the drama that gamblers were literally making book in the lobby as to its outcome. The success of the drama that night, more than confirmed by the criticisms the next morning, proved too much for Mr. Harris, not then in the best of health, and he died on the last day of the week a victim to the resultant excitement. Among his former associates was Joseph Brooks, with whom he had had a quarrel, and it was immediately after learning of the death of his old friend that Brooks went home and committed suicide.

There is one play that I should like to see properly presented, not in order to stir up sectional feeling, but because its tremendous dramatic theme offers to both adapter and actor opportunities that I have never seen realized. The theme, selling a man's body without selling his soul, tersely expressed in a line that comes down to us staggering under the weight of three-quarters of a century of ridicule—"My body belongs to you, but my soul belongs to Him Who reigneth on high"—is unsurpassed in our dramatic literature. So far as my knowledge goes, and I have seen the play many times, no adapter has ever presented the scene of the slave-auction with true regard to its dramatic possibilities. I can imagine what such a player as Salvini would have done in that scene as he turned his anxious face from the kindly would-be purchaser on one side to the brutal Legree on the other, listening the while, to the alternate bids, all

his future happiness staked on the result. The best Uncle Tom I ever saw was Wilton Lackaye in an inferior dramatization, and it was in the same performance that little Georgie Olp, who had served her stage apprenticeship as a music cue to Andrew Mack, gave an unforgettable performance of "Eva." I met her one afternoon during the run of the piece and, while complimenting her on her work advised her to adopt a more natural method in other parts.

"Don't you suppose I understand that," said this child of eleven. "Little Eva is a preposterous infant and if I were to play an unnatural part in a natural manner the people would laugh at me."

CHAPTER XXII

IN a previous chapter I have spoken of Mr. Frank A. Munsey as a pioneer in the business of publishing cheap magazines. It was his success in that line of endeavor that led him into the far more speculative field of stock gambling, in which I am told he amassed a large fortune. It was after his Wall Street ventures, and possibly because of them, that he began to gratify his long-cherished ambition to become the owner of many daily newspapers and I recall one of his public utterances in which he announced his intention of owning a thousand papers in as many cities.

Coincident with his appearance in the journalistic field was his entrance into the not dissimilar one of groceries, into which he was led in the hope of retrieving the mistake he had made in moving his printing plant to New London, Connecticut. On the main street of that beautiful New England town he erected a huge building of a style of architecture that had its genesis in the soap box. But it was not until he had installed his presses that he learned that he could not issue his magazine through the New London Post Office with New York printed on it as its place of publication. Thereupon he tore out his presses and brought them back to New York at an immense cost. Then, in order to utilize his building, he turned it into a hotel with the office and

dining-room on the upper floor. This left the ground floor vacant so he started a department store there in order to utilize the space, and thus entered into competition with all the retail merchants in the town. The merchants then assembled in conclave and decided that they would refuse to buy goods from any drummer who patronized Munsey's Hotel, and as the traveling men were beginning to look favorably on New London as a good place in which to "Sunday over," the blow was a severe one. But with characteristic persistence, Mr. Munsey proceeded to improve his hotel, remodel some of the rooms into apartments and in time the establishment became an acknowledged success.

From the shop on the ground floor sprang the chain of Mohegan Stores which now dot the country and in which groceries of every description are sold on what is termed the "cash and carry" plan—a business said to yield fabulous profits.

It was while building up his grocery trade that Mr. Munsey made his earliest newspaper ventures, one of the first of which was the purchase of the *Daily News* in New York, a paper so firmly entrenched in the hearts of nearly a hundred thousand readers that not even the *Journal* had been able to make any appreciable inroads on its circulation. That circulation had been among the laboring classes, for the *News* had always printed what was calculated to interest them. It dealt largely with the gossip of ward politicians and the conditions of the labor market and gave timely hints for the best way of qualifying for the municipal jobs. Men who were always looking for work "on a broom" or "the big

pipes" never missed their daily copy of the *News*. There was also printed each day a short story to be read by the old woman after she had cleared away the supper-table. In short, we have had in New York very few newspapers more closely adapted to their readers' needs.

The new owner proceeded to eliminate several of the best features of this publication and to introduce some ideas of his own. The short story was replaced by essays, revamped from old numbers of the magazine on, "How to Get a Young Girl Into Society" or "American Girls Who Wear Coronets."

"Is this the ould *Daily News?*" exclaimed a puzzled Celt, "or is it a circular from the A. P. A.?"

Always alert in his methods, Mr. Munsey made quick work of the demolition of the property and it was currently reported at the time that he spent nearly a million on it and finally sold it for twenty-five dollars. A local paragrapher summed up his efforts in these words: "It had always been supposed that nothing could kill the *Daily News,* but these local prophets spoke without due appreciation of the capabilities of Mr. Frank A. Munsey."

Nothing, if not venturesome, the new power in journalism extended his activities to other cities, having in view his thousand newspapers in as many towns. His heavy hand fell upon Boston, Philadelphia and Washington and meanwhile his grocery business was assuming large proportions, and its profits became such as to enable him to carry his less fortunate investments. He bought the *New York Press* and afterward the *Sun,* and as the latter had no Associated Press franchise, he merged

the two together and housed them, together with his magazines and groceries in the Broadway building once occupied by A. T. Stewart as his retail store.

Having myself but a poor head for business details, I have a great respect for any man who can conduct under the same roof the many and varied industries in which Mr. Munsey's active mind seeks expression. A visit to his vast emporium will well repay any earnest student of commerce. Here the great presses turn out the various editions of the daily papers, shaking the floors above where are stored the goods that feed both body and mind. Here we may find figs and fiction, rice and romance; poetry on one shelf, prunes on another, all in order, ticketed and labeled.

Mr. Munsey's last purchase, up to the moment of writing, was the *New York Herald,* which, since the death of Mr. Bennett, had been conducted by Commander J. D. J. Kelley, Frank B. Flaherty and the late Josiah K. Ohl, through whose efforts and those of a loyal and efficient staff the cost price had been raised from $2,500,000 to $4,250,000. In consigning the fine old journal to the knacker's yard in which repose the bones of so many of his previous ventures the new proprietor announced that it "had lost much of its old-time vitality," but it seemed to some of us that some life remained in the old corpse to the very last.

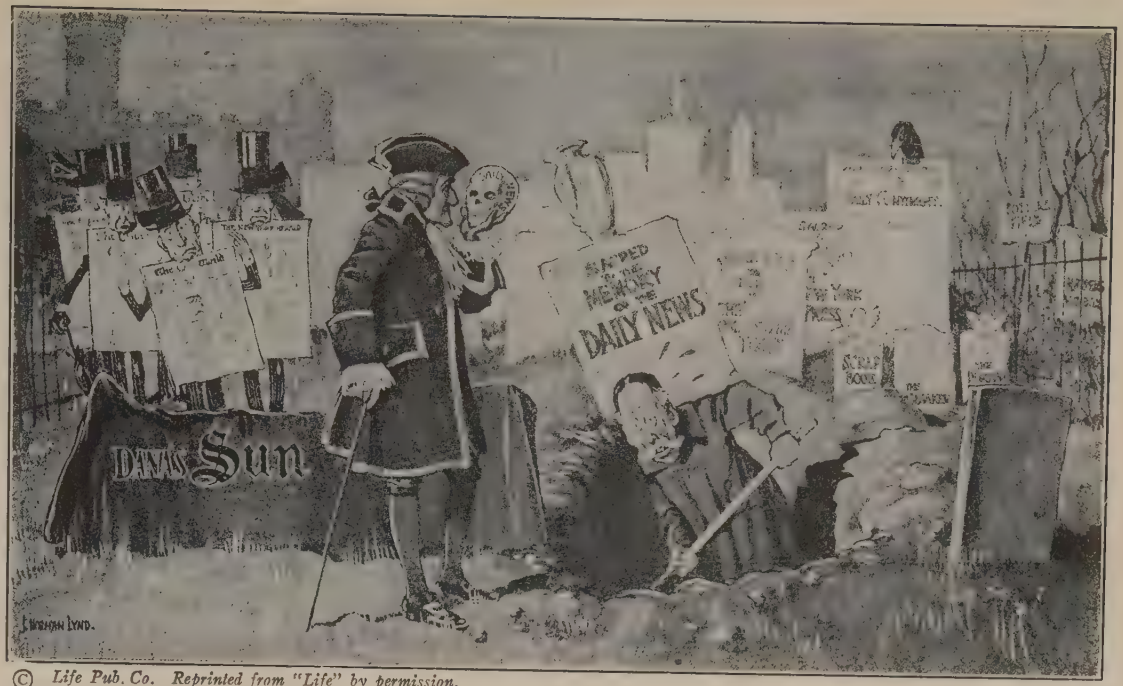
At the time of his purchase of the *Sun, Life* printed a cartoon from the pen of J. Norman Lynd of the *Herald,* representing the new owner as the Grave-Digger in *Hamlet,* in the act of burying his acquisition in a cemetery filled with his dead and gone papers and maga-

zines, while the other dailies, garbed in mourning, stood weeping beside the open grave. Mr. Munsey never forgot this cartoon and scarcely was the ink dry on the bill of sale when he discharged Lynd from the *Herald* staff with the verbal message: "He'll know what that's for."

The news that the *Herald* had been found guilty of so misusing its lost vitality as to add nearly two million dollars to its cost price carried poignant regret into the thousands of homes in which it had been for years a welcome daily visitor, and this feeling changed to resentment when it became known that the culprit was to die an ignominious death.

There is tragic interest in the finish of any notable career, and what career more notable than that of this newspaper, born in a cellar, suckled by the courage of its founder, nursed by his brains and those of his son through lusty youth to a manhood of unexampled vigor and power and then sentenced to death on the gallows!

The condemned one's last night on earth, the final going to press of the sheet that had been for years a reliable news-gatherer and an influential organ of public opinion, was an unforgettable occasion. Many old-time members of the staff assembled to see the pinioning of the still powerful arms and the putting on of the black cap and to listen with sad hearts to the sound of the falling drop. There were even those who took part in the mournful ceremony by writing a few lines of copy for the final printing and then "begged a hair of him" in memory by procuring an early copy of that number to bequeath unto their issue.



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FRANK R. MUNSEY BURYING THE NEW YORK *Sun;* A CARTOON OF PROPHECY BY J. NORMAN LYND

During the late hours of the night there surged through the corridors, the city and editorial rooms and in and out of the famous old council chamber a throng of reporters, editors, copy readers, compositors, office boys and press men, drawn together by a common sorrow and seeking cheer through brave choruses and braver defiance of the ancient ukase that forbade the bringing of alcoholic stimulants into the *Herald* building. But there was as little real gaiety as at any of the executions that so many of these men had witnessed in the past, not from choice but that they might tell how "the fatal trap was sprung and the murderer's soul launched into eternity."

A like gloom pervaded the composing room on the upper floor where the men silently made ready the forms for the last printing. Not a few of these had seen decades of service under the Herald roof and gray heads, reverently bowed, were numerous in the group that gathered to see the last of the forms lowered to the press-room bearing a memorial wreath in testimony of genuine sorrow.

Meanwhile something unlooked for had taken place on the floor below. Precisely on the stroke of twelve a uniformed bugler appeared in the doorway of the city room, and all work ceased as the clear thrilling notes of "Taps" rang through the building.

Following the ancient custom that ordains that the executioner shall remain invisible during the performance of his gruesome task, the destroyer of the *Herald* kept out of sight until the deed was done.

Mingled with the dust of the *Sun* and *Press,* the paper

was printed for a few weeks as the *Sun-Herald*. Then, through the medium of his ouija board, Mr. Munsey summoned the shade of the departed back to earth again and bestowed upon it the name by which it had been known for so many years. But in the eyes of its former readers it was but a phantom of its old self. Gone were the familiar make-up, the Rogers cartoons and the daily poem. What the *Herald* may become by the time these words reach the printed page no man, not even the artist who in *Life* had shown himself a true prophet, can foretell.

Recent events of no small importance to the nation indicate the power that lies in minorities controlled by the professional politicians who are the real rulers of our country. The crafty welding together of the Prohibition minorities in each state fastened upon us an unwanted Constitutional Amendment. Still more flagrant examples of a complete and impudent disregard of the people's wishes were shown during the summer of 1920 when two national conventions, assembled for the ostensible purpose of choosing Presidential candidates satisfactory to their respective parties, nominated men for whom there was no public demand whatever. I say this without prejudice to the newly-elected President.

The proceedings of these deliberative bodies reminded me of a similar unscrupulous use of the minority power by two shrewd politicians which passed before my own eyes in the campaign of 1888, when I was doing newspaper work at Coney Island.

John Y. McKane, then at the height of his power, had

greater gifts of political leadership than any man I have ever known. With better education, larger vision and more far-reaching ambition he might easily have become one of our great national figures and gone down in history as a statesman instead of a convict. Not even the most powerful of New York's ward politicians equaled him in absolute control of his following. In previous years McKane had thrown his voting strength on the Democratic side, but by his failure to secure from the Cleveland administration the benefits that he regarded as his rightful due, he had become embittered against the President and resolved to "knife" him at the polls.

Now at this time the Island and the Eighth Assembly District, on the lower East Side of New York, had an interchangeable population of migratory fakirs, bartenders, waiters and others who worked in New York in the winter and at the seaside in summer, and McKane saw that these could be organized into a voting element of remarkable strength. For New York was then a "pivotal state" on which politicians kept the ever-watchful eye, Republican above the Harlem River and Democratic below. Hence the phrase so often heard at election time: "He'll come down to the Bridge with fifty thousand behind him," the question being to what extent the city's Democratic vote would offset this majority.

All this is so well known to everybody who has ever taken a hand in political affairs that my careful explanation may bring a smile of amused contempt to the lips of the sophisticated. But, having noted with amazement the lamb-like docility with which this vernal nation accepted what McKane's band of fakirs and bartenders

chose to give them in 1888 and the candidates handed out to them in 1920 by a few politicians, I may perhaps be excused for telling them what they should have learned during the thirty-two intervening years.

As the summer preceding the election wore on, it became evident to the Islanders that schemes of political import were afoot, and as the time for registry drew near intimations were conveyed to the members of the floating population that it would be well for them to gain the favor of the Chief by voting in his bailiwick, a bit of courtesy which might prove reciprocal and need not interfere with the exercise of the right of suffrage elsewhere. But no hint was conveyed as to the side on which they were expected to vote. A few days before election, I attended a political meeting on the Island at which a committee was sent to McKane to inquire how he wished his followers to vote. They returned bearing the message that he would let them know early on the morning of election day and those free-born citizens cheered for fully three minutes.

He did let them know at the time stated and in no uncertain voice and all that day streams of voters passed to and fro between their two places of registry and so swelled the Republican majority that Cleveland was defeated.

The election of Harrison was a triumph for Coney Island's boss and he and his followers, carrying canes and attired in drab overcoats, marched proudly in the inauguration parade in Washington; and when the attention of Levi P. Morton was drawn to the little phalanx that had helped to make him Vice-President, he swept

off his hat and bowed his appreciation of their services. At least that is what I was told by a keen observer who was present.

But McKane's triumph was the cause of his subsequent ruin, for it gave him an abnormal belief in his own power so that on a later occasion he tore up a Supreme Court injunction with the remark: "Supreme Court injunctions don't go on this Island." His finish, like that of nearly every dictator, was ignominious, for he was sent to Sing Sing through the efforts of District Attorney Gaynor, who in so doing, gained his first step in his advance to the mayoralty.

About this time, having attained my sixtieth year, I felt justified in assuming that I had cut my wisdom teeth and began to realize the value of a college education, regarded by youth as a healthful diversion and by mature age as a fitting preparation for the duties of life. I recall my school-day belief that when I should have mastered higher mathematics and the Greek and Latin classics, there would remain no more worlds for me to conquer in the universe of learning. Later experiences, however, make me certain that a college education as a preparation for life is inferior to a post-graduate course, following years of worldly experience and making clear to the gray-haired student the real significance of the heterogeneous mass of knowledge he has gathered in his long journey. There should be a university for the elderly, with an elective course for those old enough to know what they do not know and wise enough to know what they ought to know.

The desire of the uptown half to know how the other half south of Washington Square lived, began with the advent in the Eighties of settlements and slumming parties, both imported with the approved London stamp. There were then enough loathsome plague spots in the town to provide agreeable diversion to visitors of the class now termed "automobile parties," and a foreign and native population sufficiently debased and ignorant to command the sympathies of those really zealous in good works. It is pleasant to know that poverty no longer exists here as it does in other of the world's capitals, although the myth of the "starving millions" is sedulously kept alive by professional almoners to whom it is a means of livelihood.

Some time before the war, when there was much more bitter poverty in the city than at the present time of writing, a few wealthy and benevolent gentlemen resolved to give a free Christmas Eve repast to the poor. The heads of the Salvation Army, whom they consulted, entered heartily into the scheme, saying that they would gladly distribute the viands by their fifty cars. The food, consisting of hot coffee and the ever-popular refection known as "hot dog and roll" was to be supplied by the Fifth Avenue Restaurant and offered without money, price or even ticket to whomsoever should ask. Then came the question of the amount needed and the Salvation Army officer after a brief moment of calculation said: "About one thousand portions will be enough."

That our town of millions should contain only one thousand to whom a free lunch on a cold winter's night was likely to prove worth asking for seemed unbelievable

to the projectors of the scheme, as it did to me when I was told of it the next day. In London it would have been necessary to provide for fully one hundred times that number.

This episode is worthy of record because of the number of persons who, either because of their limited intelligence or because they are aiding charity on a commission basis, go about crying: "What right has the millionaire to live in luxury while so many are starving?" The plain truth is that save in the case of those who cannot or will not work, very little bitter poverty exists in New York.

I wish I could say as much in regard to the various forms of vice which always find sustenance in a large city, especially one in which crime and some of the heads of the Police Department—not the rank and file—are on friendly terms. Soon after the Eden Musée was opened, word was conveyed to its directors that the music of its orchestra was a source of annoyance to the peace-loving family of a Police Commissioner. The nearest Commissioner lived somewhere above Forty-Second Street, but his hearing was so acute that nothing less than fifty dollars a month would deaden the sound—besides which the Musée was in Captain Williams' precinct. The linking together of these circumstances formed a chain of logic so strong that the arrangement was made and the monthly transaction entered in the ledger of this eminently respectable concern under the caption, "For the privilege of doing business." Shortly after each payment the ward man would appear at the window of the box office and remark: "The old man

is your friend"; and any delay would elicit the equally enigmatic observation: "The old man is kicking."

My own opinion is that vice and crime can always be estimated on the basis of the city's population, the laxity of its laws and the extent of the low-class alien colonies. There are just as many burglars, petty thieves, grafters, confidence men and prostitutes here in proportion to the number of inhabitants as there were when I first knew the town, but there has been a constant shifting of quarters and methods that deceives the census-taker. The "reform-waves" that sweep over the city periodically have done little save to drive the sons and daughters of sin from their flats and rookeries and scatter them abroad through the main thoroughfares and into respectable tenements. Nevertheless, reform and reformers can always command a hearing in our enlightened community.

I am careful not to use the words, "The last time I visited Sing Sing," in conversation, because it encourages some humorist of the now dominant "American Hee-haw School" to retort, "How long were you in for?" and one of the objects of my life is to exterminate this form of diversion. But I can *write* it without fear, and I do so now, adding that on that occasion I strolled through the prison with that splendid executive, the late James Connaughton, and held converse with the equally efficient and faithful public servant, State Detective Jackson, both of whom knew so much about crime and criminals that they were never invited to lecture on the subject. As we crossed the prison yard Connaughton called my attention to loafing gangs of sullen convicts

Miss Ada Lewis, as the *Tough Girl* in "Reilly and the Four Hundred"

Edward Harrigan, Author of the Most Amusing Local Farces the Town Has Ever Known

and said: "Those fellows are plotting some mischief but what can I do? The labor unions won't let me put them to work and I won't lock them up in their cells all day for that's cruel, but every one of us keepers knows there'll be an outbreak one of these fine days." And not long afterward his prophecy was fulfilled.

Later in the afternoon, Connaughton apologized for the low class of criminals then under his control. "There's nobody here worth talking about, only pick-pockets and thieving elevator boys and such like. What do you think of that pair over there for a couple of lifers?" he exclaimed contemptuously, pointing to two boys who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for throwing a train off the track on the New York Central Railway.

Obvious-minded philosophers might argue from the scarcity of great criminals in Sing Sing that crime was on the decrease, but the fact was that all the worst cases had been transferred to Dannemora.

CHAPTER XXIII

FULLY cognizant of the widespread and feverish interest in the *chroniques scandaleuses* of the metropolis, I must apologize for the scarcity of those sparkling annals of the gay life that readers of memoirs always look for. The truth is that they are entirely without the grace and fragrance that cling to the memory of the beflowered and bepowdered dames who helped make up the history of the Court of the French Kings; nor do they compare in interest with the chronicles, for the most part unwritten, of modern London and Paris. In fact vice in New York has no significance in the eyes of the historian and concerns itself with but one serious problem, the redistribution of those "swollen fortunes" which our Socialists say are a menace to national liberty.

In comparatively recent years there has grown up here a distinct social class, lying at the outer ragged edge of the theatrical profession and touching that of wealth and fashion through the medium of the infatuated male. The chief habitat of this group is on the region contiguous to Broadway known to sophisticated urban dwellers as the "roaring forties." Here in the great net-work of flats—"the prettiest little parlors that ever you did spy"—that spreads, like a gigantic spider's web, within a stone's throw of the ever-dazzling, ever-beckoning lights of the Great White Way, live those who compose the group

known variously as the "keen set" and the "swift push." In nearly every one of these ornate flats will be found, conspicuously displayed in a frame of purple plush, a face, never taken in profile, of the Hebraic type, the portrait of him known to the frequenters of the place as "the main squeeze."

Through this spider's web the feet of man are ever straying. Here fortunes wrested from Nevada silver mines, from Pennsylvania coal fields and steel mills and from the New York Stock Market, melt under the spell of cheeks to which the rabbit's foot has given a livelier iris, and that of eyes bright with the tender love that only belladonna and the hope of "winning a roll" can impart. From these flats the inheritors of noble names have gone forth, ruined in health and purse, besmirched in reputation and laughed at by the harpies whose claws have stripped them. For when in repose these faces show neither vivacity nor good-nature, but rather dour discontent and sordid greed, and a complete absence of the sense of humor. The only jokes that excite laughter in this group have as their butt the victim despoiled by their ring-covered hands.

As a literary field the "spider's web" is as yet untouched save by those realists who, devoid of imagination, write only of that which lies within the range of their restricted vision. This is not because convention excludes such topics from pages intended for polite reading, but because those who really know how to write fiction are not familiar with the life that clings to the strands of this delicate, but powerful web, while those who do know it, do not know how to write. Were a

novelist to study the subject, the myth of the "gay life" would quickly vanish, as would the romantic flavor of the aphorism, "Love pardoneth all" that enchains the feminine fancy. There is not enough real love in the whole colony to pardon anything and there is a sameness in all the life histories that makes for dull reading. To this rule there are, of course, many noteworthy exceptions, consideration of which generally leads us to the more diverting strata of the frankly criminal world.

The best I can do in treating a phase of life that plays a not inconsiderable part in the affairs of the town is to relate a few anecdotes, in each one of which, it will be observed, the peculiar humor of the "spider's web" reveals itself.

It always seemed to me that the entertainment of Weber and Fields, while always noticeably free from anything like vulgarity, reflected much of the spirit of upper Broadway, and this spirit was wittily expressed in a brief dialogue between the two principals in the cast, and I shall never forget the shouts of appreciative laughter that greeted it on that memorable first night when it was uttered.

"Mike," said Fields to his partner; "what do you think of this? A lady friend of mine found a pearl in an oyster at Rector's."

"That's nothing," rejoined Weber, whose artless mien and simple, serious utterance formed the basis of his art; "a lady friend of mine got a diamond necklace out of a lobster at Shanley's."

A group of attractively garbed young women, all members in high standing of the "keen set," were gathered before the cheery gas log one winter afternoon engaged in animated discussion of matters relating to the well-being of their kind, when the conversation turned on the qualities that constitute a perfect gentleman. One remarked that the character of Mr. Strauss, who thought nothing of opening four bottles of wine in swift succession, left nothing to be desired. Another declared that even loftier heights of good breeding had been scaled by the donor of the costly set of furs with which her wardrobe had recently been enriched, and which had been paid for from a wad as thick as a telegraph pole. It was then that the hostess of the flat spoke: "I'll tell you girls what my idea of a perfect gentleman is; it's the one who when he calls on an afternoon when you're entertaining a few friends rings the bell instead of using his own key."

The entrance of another caller diverted the deliberations of this council of perfection from the genteel accomplishments of the various Chevalier Bayards of the "roaring forties" to a favoring turn of Dame Fortune's wheel, tidings of which the new-comer was quick to impart: "Isn't it nice about dear old Goldie? She's got a live one on her staff at last, and you know she ain't as young as she used to be. You'd drop dead if I told you his name. We'd oughter all write an' congratulate her. He's married, too, so it all might have been nice and quiet if his wife hadn't got wise to it. Isn't it disgusting the

way those rich idle women go nosing round everywhere looking for trouble? We girls don't go looking for trouble! Gawd knows it's always chasing us! Well, anyway, this one got hep, and what does she do, but sit down and write asking Goldie to come and talk it over with her!"

"Did she go?" exclaimed an eager listener.

"Not she," rejoined the other. "There was nothing doing in that quarter. You know Goldie makes it a rule never to meet the wives."

Two of these tales came to me from the lips of Miss Ada Lewis, whose sense of humor is much greater than that of the ladies under discussion.

Miss Lewis appeared one summer in a piece well suited to that foolish season and dealing with the Cuban War, then in progress. A number of women calling themselves actresses had been engaged for the minor rôles of "starving Cubans," for which they made up by marking the shadows of hunger on their faces and assuming the rough garb of poverty. Thus attired they would sit chattering together about how much Maud paid for her sables and what Mr. Blumenthal was going to allow Gwendolen, until a call-boy put his head in the door and shouted: "General Lee, General Weyler and de starvin' Cubans, all up!"

Cast for a part that called for a wedding ring, Miss Lewis applied to the one woman in the company who possessed that treasure and curiosity and asked her to lend it to her for the night. "I'd let you have it in a

minute, Ada," said the other good-naturedly, "but I loaned it to Nina Farrington to rent a flat with."

After an entr'act in another play one of the ladies of the company said with a great show of indignation to Miss Lewis: "Did you see *him* sitting there in a box? And do you know that was his wife with him! What do you think of that dame's cheek—coming here and *me* on the stage?"

One evening many years ago I was assigned to describe for the *Herald* the doings behind the scenes of the first night of a spectacular production. At the request of the press agent of the theatre I recorded my favorable impressions of a plump and pleasing young woman who was making her début that night in the only pair of silk tights in the company. It often happens that a few carelessly written words, cast like a pebble into the pool of popular thought and conjecture, create ripples that spread in ever-widening circles over the entire face of the waters. The first of these ripples appeared the next morning in the form of a rumor that there was "a new front in town" and succeeding circles brought increasing prosperity to the wearer of the silken tights. Grateful for my kindly words of praise this lady invited me to dine in her apartment, and on my arrival I found two gentlemen awaiting the coming of the hostess. One of these was a Mr. Leslie, then active in affairs of the theatre, who had, as I knew, done much, in a wholly disinterested way, to secure for the lady a better engage-

ment and help her along the route to fame. The other visitor differed from Mr. Leslie in that he was of excellent financial standing and might well have been responsible for the rent had such a contingency arisen. Our hostess entered close upon my heels and hastened to the kitchen where we heard her rebuking the maid for being dilatory in preparing the meal to which we had been bidden. "You ought to have gone out and bought everything two hours ago!" she exclaimed, "instead of waiting till the last minute."

"Ah didn't hev no key ter git back," replied the servitor.

"But you went out ten minutes ago and got back all right!"

"Ah done borrow Mr. Leslie's key."

A thick silence followed this inopportune revelation.

A lady of my acquaintance whose long experience as an executive in a business house has given her the habit of terse and virile speech, received a call from a young man who wished to look at the rooms in her apartment which she desired to sublet. The visitor was hatless, and in this as in his flowing tie and rather dishevelled dress, revealed the earmarks of the bizarre element of Greenwich Village. He declared himself to be an artist and he wished lodgings for himself and a friend, the best known poet south of Fourteenth Street. Having inspected the rooms and found them to his liking, he mentioned quite casually, that the pair would be accompanied in their migration from the Village by two companions of the other sex.

"I have no objection to that myself," replied the owner of the apartment, "but I am afraid that will hardly do in this part of the town."

"It went all right in West Fourth Street."

"Yes, but this is north of Madison Square and such a proceeding would be in defiance of a power that you cannot ignore."

"We don't bow to the conventions of society!"

"This is a power much higher than any social convention."

"The law can't touch us."

"The power to which I refer stands far above the law."

"I should like to know what power it is?"

"It's the janitor."

It is difficult for the novelist to deal truthfully with this phase of life and at the same time please the great army of feminine readers to whom he must look for the bulk of his sale. He would find himself confronted with the difficult task of giving at least one of his heroines—if such as she may be so termed—a repentant finish after the fashion of her black-gowned, white-cuffed sister of the stage. Penitence is unknown in any society as well dressed and well fed as that I have indicated. A gas company might repent, but not one of these.

"Ah, had I my life to live over again knowing what I know now!" is a theme of frequent and futile speculation under many a gray thatch. It is indeed a bright

dream, the playing over again of the game of life with Fate's cards lying face uppermost on the table! To follow the long trail with every pitfall plainly visible; knowing which friends to choose, which false ones to avoid, and which among them all would next fall before the scythe of the Reaper! To know how the stock market was being rigged, which card was due from the dealer's silver box and which horse would be allowed to win; above all to distinguish between the love-light in woman's eyes and the gleam of avarice with which the wisest of us are deceived!

It is a dream in which I used to indulge before riper knowledge taught me that no life could be more dreary than one weighed down by the disillusion, the sophistication and the shattered ideals that the passing years heap upon one's shoulders. To live my days over again shackled to the ball-and-chain of worldly knowledge and experience has no appeal for me now. Rather would I retrace my steps backward from age to childhood; from the clutches of the specialists whose skill prolongs joyless life into senility; from an age ridden by germs and microbes to a simpler and happier one in which 'twere folly to be wise; from one in which the dollar is worth a nickel to that in which a nickel used to look like a dollar; from an over-populated city, hideous with noise and vulgarity, back to the smaller town that afforded time for quiet thought and in which crime and authority were not on their present sharing terms nor the line of demarcation between purely commercial activities and the practice of the fine arts, including that of letters, as indistinct as now.

Back from the joyless days of a rigid diet into the heart of the happy, foolish years when we could feast at midnight without thought of the morrow and quaff the cup without breaking an unwished-for law.

Many a time has fancy led me back along the well remembered route, joining hands here and there with the old friends who spring up—some from graves dug by John Barleycorn—to bind up the broken threads of intimacy and march with me side by side, smiling at the griefs that once seemed so keen, but from which the deeper sorrows of manhood have long since drawn the sting; picking up, now and then, the sweetheartings of other days and following them from the bitterness of death or estrangement to the splendid thrills of love's first awakening. To hope and to believe is infinitely sweeter than any realization that time can bring, and this journey leads from sombre disappointment and regrets into the old glad sunlight that gave to the mirage the semblance of reality; from the knowledge that makes plain to us how little we know and saddens the thoughtful mind with a comprehension of how much remains to be learned, back to the days of adolescence when supreme wisdom seemed almost within our grasp. It is only by taking this long journey that we learn how heavy is the weight of care, experience and worldly knowledge that time lays upon us, and what it means to feel this burden slipping off bit by bit, replaced by the lighter load of hope and ambition.

Thus one may go back through the years of early manhood into the unforgettable schooldays with the sap of life's springtide running stronger and stronger in

the veins; back through a boyhood of heedless sport brightened by those high resolves that feed so greedily on illusion; back at last into the all too brief period of childish innocence that Nature vouchsafes to us.

More than once, awake as well as dreaming, have I followed this long trail, and, God willing, I shall follow it many times again, bridging over within the space of a few minutes the six decades that lie between the autumn of life and those days of early spring when a parental love that I could neither comprehend nor appreciate guided my uncertain steps as I ran and played and shouted in the wide, shady garden.

THE END

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